No. 1
March
1980

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COMICS FEATURE

First Issue!

Archie Goodwin on EPIC

DC Adds Pages ...Raises Price

Merchandising the Superheroes

Comics Writers in Hollywood

The Legion: Then and Now

Gene Colan

Jerry Bails

News and More

Volume 1 No. 1

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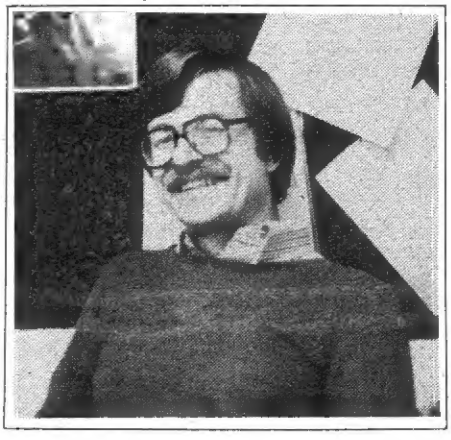

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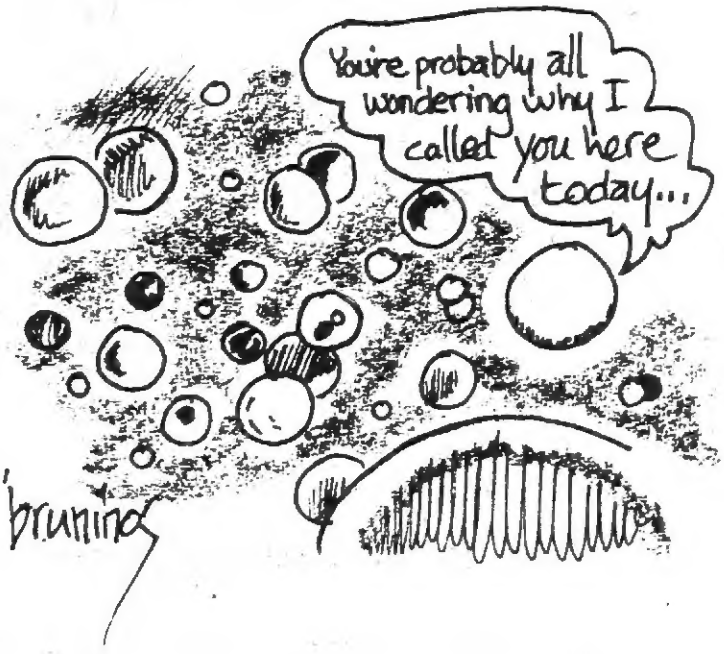
Opening Notes

Editorial by Dean Mullaney



In which we say hello, tell you what we're all about, and reveal the nature of the game.

For the past twenty years, comic fans have been told by the major comics publishers that fans represent a very small percentage of the total readership. In recent years, however, with the advent of greater numbers of established comic book specialty shops catering *only* to the fan market, all this has changed. Both Marvel and DC Comics are becoming aware that the direct, or non-returnable sales of comics to the fan market, is a very important part of their business; a fact which has already spurred an increasing number of small-press alternative comics publishers since the release, five years ago, of Mike Friedrich's *Star*Reach*.

Comic book fans now represent a sizeable portion of the total comic book readership, a portion which can no longer be ignored.

COMICS FEATURE is a magazine which is aware of the impact of the comic book fans, and is a magazine which will present complete and exhaustive coverage of the many aspects of the medium. New comics are only a part of the total picture. Most comics fans are collectors, as well, and COMICS FEATURE will include articles and columns on older comics, the people who have made the medium what it is today, the increasing role of the specialty shop, the effects of merchandising and licensing on comics publishing, the importance of comics history, the growing impact of the alternative publishers, the influence and history of newspaper strips, and also, the role and influence of comics fandom itself.

A quick glance at our table of contents for this first issue gives a good indication of the diversity of our coverage. Our news section clues you in on recent events in comics (*all* comics, not just Marvel and DC); our in-depth interview with Archie Goodwin reveals his plans and outlook for *Epic Illustrated*; Mike Flynn, publisher of the renowned *Legion Outpost*, compares The Legion of Super-Heroes of today with their various adventures over the years; Richard Howell eulogizes Leonard Starr's newspaper strip, "*On Stage*;" Gene Colan's thirty-fifth anniversary as a comics artist is celebrated with a look at his achievements and techniques; the merchandising of the superheroes is given a close evaluation; Carl Macek discovers why so many comics creators have moved to the West Coast; *Captain Canuck*'s return is looked at; Peter Sanderson begins his book review column with Jules Feiffer's new comic book novel; and Peter Gillis speculates on why comic books are called 'comic' books.

In addition; our "Fandom Zone" section offers a bundle of useful information and perspectives on fandom itself. Noted fan Jerry Bails, who played an important role in the shaping of comics fandom, reminisces about the early days; Jay Zilber discusses what it's like making the progression from neo-fan to zine publisher to professional writer; and as a service to you, we present listings of comics clubs and conventions in your area, and of amateur press associations you can join. Plus, we review small-press fanzines which you may be interested in reading.

COMICS FEATURE will entertain you, inform you, and offer a service to you. It is a magazine you can turn to for in-depth coverage of all areas of the comics medium. And we want your feedback. Send all your letters to our editorial address and let us know what you like, what you'd like to see included in this magazine, and how we can better serve you, the backbone of the comics industry. Next issue will see the start of our letters column and we'd like you to join us.

Read on and enjoy ■

HEADLINES

DC ADDS PAGES AND RAISES PRICE

Beginning with their June releases (September cover date), DC will increase the number of pages of stories in their regular 32 page comics from seventeen to twenty-five. The price of each comic will go up to fifty cents. To accomodate eight pages of new story material in each issue, house ads and paid advertisements will be cut. Letters columns will remain intact.

The dollar comics will not go up in price, and will gain one more story page per issue.

As a result of the increase in story pages, *Justice League of America* and *Legion of Super-Heroes* will now contain twenty-five page stories, with solo Legionnaire stories occasionally appearing in that book. The other fifty cent DC books will contain the following eight page backup features:

Action: *Air Wave* alternating with *The Atom*, both by Bob Rozakis.

Adventure: Each issue will now have *Aquaman* by J. Marc DeMatteis and possibly Dick Giordano, in addition to *Plastic Man* and *Starman*.

Batman: Batman and Robin adventures. Robin will quit college and take a job with the Wayne Foundation in keeping with his role as heir to the Wayne holdings.

The Brave and the Bold: *The Immortal Man*, a new character and not the one who previously appeared in *Strange Adventures*.

DC Comics Presents: A series conceived by Julie Schwartz entitled *Whatever Happened To. . .?*, in which various writers and artists will show what became of former leading DC characters.

The Flash: *Firestorm* by Gerry Conway.

Ghosts: *Dr. 13-the Ghost Breaker*.

Green Lantern: *Adam Strange*, written by Laurie Sutton and drawn by Dave Cockrum.

House of Mystery: *I, Vampire* by J. Marc DeMatteis and possibly Tom Sutton.

Jonah Hex: *Scalphunter*, who will no longer be in his own book.

The New Adventures of Superboy: *Krypto, Superbaby* and *Superboy's Diary* will rotate.

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WE DEFY YOU TO UNLOCK THE SHATTERING
SECRETS OF
HAUNTED HOUSE
IF YOU'RE NOT INSIDE TO HELP, MY FRIEND NICK, WILL GET YOU!
MINNEY'S FRIEND

© 1980 DC Comics, Inc.

LOUISE JONES JOINS MARVEL

Louise Jones, formerly editor of Warren's *Eerie*, *Creepy* and *Vampirella*, became an editor at Marvel in January. She will be in charge of *X-Men* (beginning with issue 138), *Man-Thing*, *Star Trek*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Shogun Warriors* and *Dazzler* (whose first issue will go on sale in March).

Jones is very pleased to be at Marvel, which she finds to be a creative company both artistically and economically. She admires the fact that despite the problems in the national economy Marvel is not cutting back but is instead "moving ahead in a positive fashion to maximize its potential." She finds editor-in-chief Jim Shooter and other colleagues to be "real progressive people." Moreover, working at Marvel is "a lot of fun, much more fun than Warren ever was."

Jones says she has had no problem making the transition to working in the genres of superheroic adventure and space opera: "Storytelling is storytelling." She admits, though, that it takes a while to learn the names of the "plethora of characters" in the constantly expanding Marvel Universe.

Her editorial philosophy is, simply, that "Comics are for entertainment, not for serious study. . . To do comics for serious study is to take the fun out of them." This is not to say that she will minimize the importance of characterization in her books. Jones describes Marvel comics as being "high class soap operas" in a positive sense—like *Masterpiece Theatre* with superheroes. A comic's primary goal is to stir the emotions by provoking laughter, thrills or even tears, she feels. Even "heavy" themes can work in comics, she asserts, if they provide entertainment in this way. She likes a comics plot to have a degree of enjoyable absurdity about it, however.

The Dazzler, Jones reports, wants to be a singer, not a superheroine, but circumstances will continually conspire to force her into adventures. With the Sanctuary destroyed in *Shogun Warriors*, the characters "will have to solve problems in more realistic ways" rather than relying on a "deus ex machina." *Star Trek* will be as much like the television show as possible, although the stories will be set after the one in the movie. There will be particular emphasis on "the interplay between the characters." Walt Simonson will both *write* and draw *Battlestar Galactica* beginning with issue 18. *Man-Thing* stories will be mixes of human interest and adventure, leaning more heavily in one direction in some issues and in the other in other issues. As for *X-Men*, Jones says she "won't mess around with a good thing."

Secrets of Haunted House: An as yet untitled series.

Super-Friends: *Wonder Twins* by E. Nelson Bridwell, rotating with foreign superheroes created by Bridwell.

Superman: *World of Krypton*, rotating with various other series.

The Unexpected: *Johnny Peril*.

The Unknown Soldier: *Dateline: Frontline* by Cary Burkett (Ric Estrada will do three issues), *Enemy Ace* by Robert Kanigher, and *Blackhawk* drawn by Dave Cockrum will all appear.

Warlord: The three unpublished Jim Starlin *Omac* stories will appear, followed by a new Grell series, *The Wizard World*, and occasional full length Warlord adventures.

Weird War Tales: *The War that Time Forgot* and *Creature Commandos* will both appear.

Wonder Woman: *The Huntress* by Paul Levitz, Joe Staton and possibly Bob Smith.

Headlines

RADIO SHACK TO SELL NEW SUPERMAN COMIC

A bonus 32 page *Superman* comic book insert will appear in four April release DC comics, and be repackaged and distributed through the Radio Shack stereo-electronics retail stores.

The insert contains a new 28-page story by Cary Bates, Jim Starlin and Dick Giordano entitled "The Computers That Saved Metropolis," and front and back covers by Ross Andru and Giordano. The entire package was edited by Julie Schwartz and William M. Palmer, editor of Radio Shack publications.

The four DC comics to contain the bonus insert will be *Action* 509, *House of Mystery* 282, *Legion of Super-Heroes* 265 and *Superboy* 6.

DC has expressed optimism with this unique method of comics packaging and will be awaiting Radio Shack customer reaction to the repackaged comic book.

8:50 A.M.-- ONLY THIRTEEN MINUTES TO GO BEFORE MY CRUSHING CATASTROPHE STRIKES METROPOLIS! AND THEN IT WILL ONLY BE A MATTER OF HEARTBEATS BEFORE CONTACT--
--WITH MY CAPED TARGET--
--SUPERMAN!
FIFTY-ONE MINUTES PAST EIGHT...
I'D BETTER REALLY HUSTLE IF I'M GOING TO FINISH THIS MORNING PATROL ACROSS METROPOLIS IN TIME TO MAKE MY 9 O'CLOCK APPOINTMENT--
--AND CARRY OUT A VERY SPECIAL JOB FOR SUPERMAN!
FOR YOUR OBSERVATION-- TWO DYNAMIC MEN OF ACTION!
ONE, A PARAGON OF PERIL-- THE INSIDIOUS MASTER OF VILLAINY KNOWN TO THE WORLD AS MAJOR DISASTER!
THE OTHER, A CAPED CHAMPION-- THE MIGHTY MAN OF STEEL WHO FIGHTS A NEVER-ENDING BATTLE FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN WAY!
SUPERMAN
The COMPUTERS THAT SAVED METROPOLIS!
WRITER: CARY BATES ART: JIM STARLIN & DICK GIORDANO
TM and © DC COMICS INC 1980

MARV WOLFMAN MAPS PLANS AT DC

Having just returned to DC in January, Marv Wolfman already finds himself writing three of the company's top books—*Superman, Batman,* and *Green Lantern*—and the revival of an old favorite, *Teen Titans.*

Only Robin, Kid Flash and Wonder Girl will remain from the old Teen Titans, and four new members will be added. The Changeling is Beast Boy of the original Doom Patrol, with a new costume. Cyborg is a part-robotic black male possessed of super-strength and other powers. Raven is a young woman skilled in the martial arts and capable of astral projection. Starfire, who is not to be confused with a previous DC character of the same name, is an alien female who can shoot power blasts. The Titans will have a new headquarters building situated on an island in New York's East River.

Wolfman plans to spend his first few issues of *Superman* simply getting to know the characters. However, his very first issue, which will appear in June or July, will bring about the first integration of DC's superhero books and its pure mystery books through the guest appearance of Destiny. In this story, Superman gives up his superheroic role when he realizes that the people of Metropolis have become overly dependent on him and are no longer trying to solve their own problems. After his first half year on the book, Wolfman plans to do a series of three two-part stories involving Luthor, and, further off in the future, introduce Darkseid as a major recurring Superman villain.

Wolfman hopes to bring more of an element of continuity to the book, and also "to play with the relationships" in the Superman-Lois-Clark triangle, which he feels have reached a "dead end." He also plans to devise some new alien races which will appear in all of his books (excluding *Batman*). A different artist will design the appearance of each race so as to assure each looks quite different from the others.

Wolfman is currently writing for *Batman* although it is possible that he may be switched to doing the Batman stories in *Detective* in the future. Gerry Conway will get whichever of the two Batman series Wolfman does not ultimately receive. Although Len Wein has been doing supervillain stories in BATMAN every issue, Wolfman is uncertain whether or not he will continue this trend himself. His first issues, 328-329, will be a two-parter involving Two-Face, but his third will be "a pure detective story." Wolfman states that he would like to see "all kinds of stories" in *Batman*, but would not like to use many super-powered villains. Robin will turn up in the main story several times a year, and Wolfman would like to emphasize the vigilante aspect of the Batman.

Wolfman finds *Green Lantern* to be the easiest of his new books to write so far. He plans to strengthen GL's relationship with Carol Ferris, bring in a number of secondary characters, and to emphasize Green Lantern's role as the superhero for an entire sector of space and not just the Earth. This latter point will be made in a story based on an idea suggested by Mark Gruenwald, in which the people of the homeworld of Abin Sur, who appointed Hal Jordan his successor as Green Lantern, force Jordan to come to their world, which has fallen into ruin since Abin Sur's death.

There will be numerous other space stories, including one in which another alien race decides that is is superior to the Guardians and tries to take over the latter's self-appointed function as galactic policemen. In another GL story, the Guardians will ask Adam Strange to become Green Lantern for Rann's space sector. Space Ranger will turn up in a new "future Green Lantern" adventure.

Wolfman's initial issues, however, will be more down to Earth, as he shows the government shutting down Ferris Aircraft due to the mysterious crashes of planes the firm had built. Doctor Polaris will be the villain in Wolfman's first two issues, 133-134, and 133 will bring Bruce Gordon to Ferris Aircraft, thus paving the way for Eclipso's newest rampage in 135-136. Yet another villain will be responsible for kidnapping Carol Ferris's parents.

Wolfman says he will try to humanize Hal Jordan. As a test pilot, Jordan, he believes, was a hero before he ever became Green Lantern. Jordan likes women and sports, and is a take charge type. In short, Jordan is not the retiring opposite of Green Lantern, in the Clark Kent tradition, but the same kind of person.

Headlines

WARREN NAMES NEW EDITOR

Warren Publishing has named Chris Adames to replace Louise Jones as editor. Adames' official title is Managing Editor and he will handle *Creepy*, *Eerie* and *Vampirella*.

Reached for comment about his plans for the Warren line of black-and-white magazines, Adames reports that he doesn't foresee any great changes, at least for the near future. "Art has been commissioned and we will be continuing with what we've been doing for the next few issues of each magazine."

Adames was previously assistant editor of the three Warren magazines.

RUSSELL AND THOMAS TO ADAPT ELRIC

P. Craig Russell and Roy Thomas are adapting Michael Moorcock's Elric novel *The Dreaming City* to comics form. Another Elric story, *The Gods Laugh*, is also being adapted by Thomas and may be illustrated by Russell, although an undetermined artist may do the second story. *The Dreaming City* will be fifty-eight pages and *The Gods Laugh*, thirty pages. Both stories will be collected in a ninety page book which will be in full color and is being packaged by Mike Friedrich's Star*Reach company for publication by Baronet Books.

Russell is pencilling, inking and coloring the first story from a plot synopsis by Thomas, who will later script. The first twenty-four pages, or two chapters, are completed and will be excerpted in Marvel's *Epic Illustrated*. No specific release date has been announced for the book, although Russell is working with a November 15th deadline on the first story.

THE COMING OF DARK PHOENIX

X-Men 137, a double-sized issue on sale in June, will, according to scripter Chris Claremont, be "the *X-Men* story of the decade "and the culmination of all the "new X-Men" issues published up to that time. The storyline will center on the "Dark Phoenix" who will first appear at the close of issue 134. Dark Phoenix will battle and defeat the X-Men in 135, which will also contain appearances by the Fantastic Four, the Silver Surfer, Spider-Man and Dr. Strange. In 136 Dark Phoenix battles Professor Xavier. Lilandra and her Imperial Guard appear in the double-sized 137 as, briefly, do the Avengers and the Watcher. In this issue the X-Men battle the Imperial Guard in the blue area of the moon; if the X-Men lose, Phoenix will die.

After 138, which will be an "album issue" recounting the history of the X-Men, the book will take a "whole new direction." The focus will be on Wolverine, Colossus, Nightcrawler and Storm.

THUS IT COMES TO PASS THAT, FOR EACH AND EVERY SUPER-POWERED BEING FROM THE MYRIAD NATIONS OF THE EARTH, THERE IS A MOMENT WHEN TIME ITSELF SEEMS TO STOP AS THEY ARE SNATCHED FROM THEIR ENDEAVORS...TO REAPPEAR HERE, ASSEMBLED IN A VAST ARENA, UTTERING IN A MULTICITY OF LANGUAGES THE SINGLE QUESTION THAT IS IN EVERY MIND!
HEY, WHERE THE HECK ARE WE?
© 1980 Marvel Comics Group

Sneak preview of the largest collection of Marvel superheroes ever assembled in one story: over 70 characters are seen in this two-page excerpt by Romita, Jr./Marcos from Marvel Superheroes *at the Summer Olympics, planned for release as a tabloid coinciding with the Olympics in Moscow. Editor Mark Gruenwald has revealed that in the event of a U.S. boycott of the Moscow Olympics, he has a contingency plan to delete all references to the Olympics without damaging the story.*

Headlines

STERN AND BYRNE REVITALIZE CAPTAIN AMERICA

With issue 247 Roger Stern and John Byrne will assume the roles of writer and penciller for *Captain America*. They will co-plot the book, and have already worked out storylines for a little over a year's worth of issues. According to Stern, they want to emphasize Captain America's "mystique" as "the embodiment of freedom." Issue 250 will concern an attempt to persuade Captain America to run for the presidency.

Stern states that he and Byrne want to put both a great deal of action and a good amount of character development into the magazine. They intend to focus strongly on Steve Rogers' neighbors in his apartment house, and, in a welcome change from other comics, promise not to entangle these "everyday" people in Captain America's superheroic adventures.

The team will introduce a new romantic interest for Steve Rogers named Bernadette Rosenthal, a college friend of his current neighbor, fireman Mike Farrell. "Bernie" is a glassblower and runs a shop in Greenwich Village; she will also be living in the same apartment building as Rogers. Through their evolving romance and the contrast in their lifestyles and points of view, Stern hopes to show "how out of place Rogers is" in 1980. "It's a May-December romance," Stern explains, "and she doesn't know it."

Baron Strucker and Nick Fury will appear in issue 247, which launches a three-part story involving Machinesmith and Dragon Man. Issue 247 will also "clear up" Steve Gerber's origin for Captain America from over a year ago. Issue 250 will be the presidency story, and Batroc the Leaper and Mr. Hyde return in 251-252. In 253-254 Cap journeys to England to learn whatever happened to Spitfire and the two Union Jacks, and once again to battle Baron Blood. The 40th anniversary issue, 255, will present Cap's definitive origin story. After the first of next year there will be a two- or three-part story with the Red Skull in which the Skull's real face will be revealed for the first—and last—time. Following that will be stories with Arnim Zola and the Ameridroid.

© 1980 Marvel Comics Group
Steve Rogers' new romantic interest: "Bernie" Rosenthal.

MEDIASCENE CHANGES NAME TO "PREVUE"

Mediascene, Steranko's tabloid magazine of comics, science fiction, fantasy and film changes its name to *Prevue* beginning with issue #41. With the change in names comes a change in format, to one similar to *Look* magazine, and a change in price, to $4.00. *Prevue* will have four-color covers and some interior color as well. Reached for comment, Steranko reports that the focus of the magazine, as the title suggests, will be on upcoming projects. "If I don't get if first, I'll throw it out. I think my readers are a lot like me in that they're curious about what's coming out and what they can look forward to." New features will be added to the magazine and some old ones, like "Coming Attractions" (covering films and television, personalities and the like), will be reinstated. Some new writers have been added to the staff to accommodate the additional workload.

The first new issue, a January-February 1980 release, will contain between 80 and 90 pages and feature the first appearance in a magazine of *The Empire Strikes Back*. Steranko's exclusive on the sequel to *Star Wars* will include stills, art, interviews and articles.

Steranko expects to broaden the magazine's coverage and in the future may, for example, begin a music column. He also hopes to broaden his readership and is currently negotiating with several distributors to get *Prevue* on the newsstands.

UPCOMING FROM HEAVY METAL

The April issue of *Heavy Metal* will present the first part of "Champakou" by Jeronaton, "Scenes from the Suburbs: November" by Caza, "Of Needle and Thread" by Bilal, the third chapter of "Professor Thintwhistle" by Steve Styles, the second chapter of "Changes" by Matt Howarth, "Air Tight Garage" by Moebius, the first installment of "Rock Opera" by Rod Kierkegaard, Jr., and the Sidebar "Trekking down the Black Hole" by Norman Spinrad.

The May issue will contain the second part of "Champakou," a self-contained eight-page excerpt from Moebius's "Mississippi River" (a historical story set after the Civil War, not a science fiction piece), the first part of a serial "The Alchemist Supreme" by Ribera, "Construction Project" by Michael Gross, "Scenes from the Suburbs: December" by Caza, "Going Native" by Bilal, the fourth chapter of "Professor Thintwhistle," the third chapter of "Changes," another installment of "Rock Opera" and a Sidebar by Barry N. Malzburg. There will also probably be a gallery of excerpts from *Dan Dare, The Tolkien Bestiary* and *The Studio*.

It is rumored that Heavy Metal will be publishing a companion magazine dealing with adventure stories beginning at the end of June.

Headlines

RECENT COMIC STRIPS REPRINTED

Tempo Books, a division of Grosset & Dunlap, has released several mass market paperback reprints of recent newspaper comic strips. The Max Allan Collins and Rick Fletcher *Dick Tracy vs. Angeltop* storyline has been collected in book form, and the recently completed sequence in which Tess Tracy gives birth to a son will be available in May as *Dick Tracy Meets the Punks.*

Also available is a volumn of Bud Sagendorf's *Popeye*, including stories with the Sea Hag and Poopdeck Pappy, as well as three *Flash Gordon* collections from the late 1960s and early 1970s, and a Caniff *Steve Canyon*, Dik Brown *Hagar the Horrible*, among others.

Editor of the series, Sarah Ashman, relates that more books will be forthcoming. Watch our *Short Subjects* listing in coming months for additional releases.

MARVEL MAGAZINES

Michael Golden has illustrated two stories for *Howard the Duck?*: Issue 5's "Drakula" in which Howard meets Dracula and thinks he's been turned into a vampire, and issue 6's 55-page *Duckworld* adventure. Both stories are written by Bill Mantlo.

John Buscema's *Merlin* will appear in *Marvel Preview* 22 with tone work by Tom Palmer. Buscema plotted the first half of the story and Doug Moench the conclusion, with Moench scripting.

Howard Chaykin has pencilled, inked and colored a *Dominic Fortune* story written by Denny O'Neil that will appear as the back-up feature in *Hulk* 21.

Tomb of Dracula 6 teams Dracula with Doctor Doom in a story to be illustrated by Gene Colan and Tom Palmer.

Short Subjects

Marvel

- Michael Golden will become regular cover artist for *Rom* with issue 7, and the X-Men will guest star in the book sometime in the future. Upcoming issues will give a more detailed look at Rom's homeworld, Galador, and will attempt to show why the Wraiths are evil.
- The Silver Surfer guest stars in the double-sized *Incredible Hulk* 250. Steve Ditko will pencil and ink the previous issue, featuring the return of the villainous Jack Frost (formerly the Blizzard, not the Liberty Legionnaire) in "Of Ice and Men" by Bill Mantlo.
- Archie Goodwin's and Al Williamson's adaptation of *The Empire Strikes Back* begins in *Star Wars* 38. Due to the *Empire* adaptation there will be no *Star Wars Annual* this year. The collected adaptation will be packaged in a paperback book which will be published and distributed by Marvel itself.
- Denny O'Neil takes over writing *Amazing Spider-Man* with issue 207. Dr. Strange will be the guest star. The previous issue will be a fill-in by Roger Stern that will resolve the problem of Jonah Jameson's nervous breakdown.

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- Dominic Fortune—as well as Dum Dum Dugan as a young man—will soon be appearing in *Marvel Premiere*. Howard Chaykin did the layouts and Terry Austin the inking. David Micheline will script over a plot by Len Wein.
- John Romita, Jr. has been named as the new permanent artist on *Amazing Spider-Man*, marking the first time a father and son have been regular pencillers on the same series. Romita, Sr., of course, began pencilling *Amazing Spider-Man* with issue #39 and continued with the series for close to sixty issues.
- *Avengers* 200 will be a double-sized issue by David Micheline, George Perez and Dan Green. Its cryptic title: "Ms. Marvel's Baby."
- Machine Man will meet the Fantastic Four in issue 15 of his magazine, and will eventually battle Alpha Flight in the course of his

AND SO, THE NEXT AFTERNOON AS THE DUGAN TRAVELLING CIRCUS OF WONDERS GIVES A SPECIAL BENEFIT PERFORMANCE...
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! IT IS MY GREAT PLEASURE TO PRESENT--
--HIGH ABOVE THE CENTER RING, THE DEATH-DEFYING AERIAL ARTISTRY OF OUR SPECIAL GUEST PERFORMER--
--DOMINIC FORTUNE!
YAYYY!
WHAT A MAN!
WHILE NEARBY...
"THAT'S CEPHALLO'S TRAILER, AN' HE MUST BE INSIDE--
--I HEAR SNORIN'!
YEAH, BUT WHAT IF SOMEONE COMES ALONG AN' DON'T LIKE OUR "BORROWIN'" THIS CEPHALLO-WHATSITSFACE?
DON'T WORRY--
--YOU JUST GRAB THE TRAILER. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE DISTRACTION!
MOMENTS LATER...
DUGAN REALLY BAWLED ME OUT WHEN HE CAUGHT ME SKYWRITIN' THIS TAKE!
BUT NOW I'LL SHOW HIM THAT NO ONE YELLS AT BIG EARL KAWOLSKI!

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Short Subjects

search for his missing arm.
- El Aguila returns in *Power Man/Iron Fist* 65. The book will also be bringing back some villains from Iron Fist's homeland of K'un-L'un.
- The plans for a series of promotional comics that Marvel was to do for Coca-Cola have been suspended, at least temporarily. As a result, the Fantastic Four story written and drawn by John Byrne for this series will instead appear as a two-parter in *Fantastic Four* 220 and 221. The Hulk story by Doug Moench, Steve Ditko and Al Milgrom will become this year's *Hulk Annual*, and the Spider-Man story by Steven Grant, Jim Mooney and Mike Esposito will become the *Spectacular Spider-Man Annual*.
- *Marvel Team-Up* will soon be experimenting with issues that team the Hulk with guest stars. Already planned are a Hulk-Power Man pairing by Mike Barr and Ron Wilson and a Hulk-Spider-Woman meeting by Steven Grant and Carmine Infantino.
- *Doctor Strange* will be moving away from horror and monster stories into straight fantasy adventures. Issue 41 wraps up the Mordo story (with guest appearances by the Man-Thing and Jennifer Kale) and the next three issues will concern the origin of Wong. The N'garai may return (both in *Strange* and *X-Men*) and several issues will be devoted to American Indian demons. Also slated for returns are Nightmare, Umar, and tentatively set for issue 50, Dormammu. Michael Golden will be doing covers for the book.
- Mary Jo Duffy and Wendy Pini are collaborating on an eight page Triton story which will appear in the same issue of *Marvel Spotlight* as a ten page Quicksilver tale by Duffy, Alan Weiss and Bob Layton.
- Roy Thomas will wind up his Celestials/Ring of the Nibelung epic in the double-sized *Thor* 300.

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DC

- *Wonder Woman* 269 inaugurates a three-parter in which she renounces her life as a superhero and returns to Paradise Island. Steve Trevor will return to the book once again.
- Green Arrow quits the Justice League in issue 181, which involves the Star-Tsar; and Felix Faust returns in 182, which will have a cover by Dave Cockrum.
- The New Gods will join in this summer's Justice League-Justice Society team-up.
- Marv Wolfman and Dave Cockrum have done an inventory *Brave and the Bold* which teams the Earth-2 Batman with the Blackhawks in World War II.

General

- George Evans has been named as the replacement for Al Williamson on the *Secret Agent Corrigan* newspaper strip.
- *The Complete Manhunter Saga* has been released from Excalibar Enterprises, and reprints all of the critically acclaimed series by Archie Goodwin and Walt Simonson which appeared in *Detective Comics*. In a handsome 8½" x 11" format, the book is perfect bound and is printed in black-and-white on quality white paper. The retail price is $8.50.
- *Elfquest* #6 has just been released, bearing a new cover price of $1.25. The story's title is "The Quest Begins." Wendy Pini's alternative comic book will go up to forty pages beginning with issue #7, featuring eight pages of material including an expanded letter column and cartoons.
- *Starlog* magazine will be releasing two new *Starlog Photo Guides* in coming months, both to appear in trade paperback format. March brings a 36-page full color book covering science fiction heroes such as The Incredible Hulk, Star Trek, Wonder Woman, Star Wars, etc., and will sell for $3.95. April brings the rerelease in enlarged format of *Spaceships*, 96 pages in full color selling for $7.95.
- Playboy Press will release in April an original illustrated science fiction adventure book of Ron Goulart and Gil Kane's *Star Hawks* newspaper strip, entitled *Star Hawks: Empire* 99. Kane has also completed a new wraparound cover for the book.

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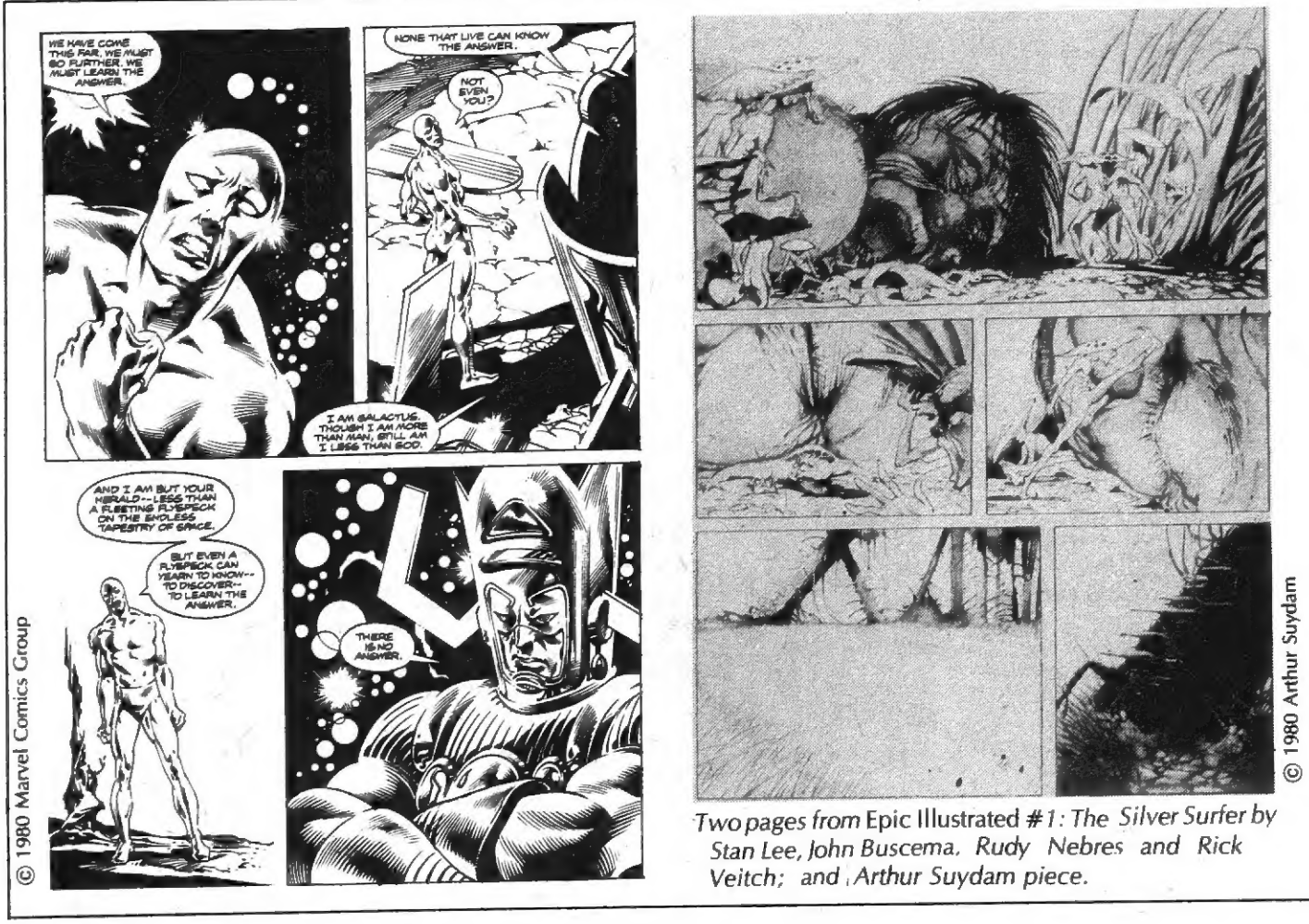
Comics Feature Interview:

Archie Goodwin a


WE HAVE COME THIS FAR, WE MUST GO FURTHER. WE MUST LEARN THE ANSWER.
NONE THAT LIVE CAN KNOW THE ANSWER.
NOT EVEN YOU?
I AM GALACTUS. THOUGH I AM MORE THAN MAN, STILL AM I LESS THAN GOD.
AND I AM BUT YOUR HERALD--LESS THAN A FLEETING FLYSPECK ON THE ENDLESS TAPESTRY OF SPACE.
BUT EVEN A FLYSPECK CAN YEARN TO KNOW--TO DISCOVER--TO LEARN THE ANSWER.
THERE IS NO ANSWER.
© 1980 Marvel Comics Group
© 1980 Arthur Suydam

Two pages from Epic Illustrated *#1: The Silver Surfer by Stan Lee, John Buscema, Rudy Nebres and Rick Veitch; and Arthur Suydam piece.*

Archie Goodwin is one of the most respected people in the comics field. He has edited, at one time or another, the Warren magazines, the Marvel black-and-white magazines, a number of comics at DC, and the entire Marvel color line. As a comics writer he has done superb work on the acclaimed Manhunter *series in* Detective, *the* Secret Agent Corrigan *newspaper strip, the comics adaptation of* Alien, *Marvel's* Star Wars, *and others. He brings this wealth of experience, from both the writer's and editor's point of view, to Marvel's* Epic Illustrated. *In the following interview, conducted in January as he began work on the second issue of the new magazine, Goodwin offers insights into his approach to* Epic Illustrated.

FEATURE: We've heard so much about how new and different *Epic* is going to be. How will *Epic* differ from the other Marvel anthology magazines?

GOODWIN: Well, one, in terms of production, we'll have full color offset printing and much better paper stock than any of the other Marvel magazines. We'll also be covering a wider range of material—anything that embraces fantasy or science fiction. I visualize *Epic* as including anything from fairy tales to real hardcore, problem-solving science fiction. I'd like it to have a little bit of everything. I think the image of Marvel Comics, in general, is the whole action orientation, the fighting and things like that. While there will be stories in *Epic* that will have those elements, what I'm looking for is material that has something visually spectacular. And it doesn't necessarily have to be fighting, killing or sex. I think we'll have some sex in the magazine, but treated as a natural part of the story, not as something where you're flipping through the magazine and suddenly it leaps out at you. "Oh, wow! Hey! Naked broads! Naked guys!" If there is violence or sex in the story, I'm going to try to make it subtle, or at least fit in part of the story.

FEATURE: So you will include mood pieces and character studies as opposed to straight action stories.

GOODWIN: Sure. The only stipulation I have is that I'd like it to have a

a nd Epic Illustrated

© 1980 Steve Bissette and Rick Veitch

© 1980 P. Craig Russell, a Star*Reach Production

Two pages from Epic Illustrated *#2: A Steve Bissette and Rick Veitch piece; and Siegfried by P. Craig Russell.*

visually spectacular nature. If it were a character piece, hopefully the kind of landscapes or the kind of images in the character's mind—if that was explored, it would have something that would visually grab you; or if it didn't, perhaps the way the story was approached in terms of rendering, with the whole art approach being in some way different.

FEATURE: What audience are you aiming for with *Epic*? The regular Marvel Comics readers, *Heavy Metal*'s readers, science fiction readers...?

GOODWIN: I think that with the mainstream Marvel comics readership you figure generally covers the age from 10 until about the beginning of high school. You also get more than that, but you consider that a round figure. What we'd like to do with *Epic* is grab everyone from high school age on up. I'm sure we'll get a certain number of younger readers, and hopefully, a number of older readers, too.

FEATURE: Since *Epic* was first announced, there has been speculation concerning how similar it will be to *Heavy Metal*. It has been argued that *Heavy Metal* stresses art over story content. Are you conscious of that line of thought when you're compiling material for *Epic*, and are you going to emulate, or avoid that?

GOODWIN: I will very definitely try to avoid that. One of the first things Jim Shooter asked me to see if I'd be interested in editing *Epic* was what could I do to make it different from *Heavy Metal*. The obvious thought is that there should be solid stories along with the great art. I think it will take a while to really get the story levels up to the level of the artwork, but I think that's always been a problem in comics in general.

FEATURE: Are you going to be writing for *Epic* yourself?

GOODWIN: I hope to be. I don't know, ethically, how that will work out. I'll have to work out some arrangement where someone else passes on what I write, to get someone else's opinion.

FEATURE: In terms of storytelling, do you plan to stay within the conven-

"One of the first things Jim Shooter asked me...was what could I do to make it different from *Heavy Metal*."

tional forms of layout and design, or will there be experimentation?

GOODWIN: I think that's another thing that will make *Epic* different from the other Marvel magazines. In Marvel comics, one of the things you stress is straightforward, clear storytelling, which I think is right for those particular comics. Where we have a 96 page magazine like *Epic*, what I hope to do is get a mix so that it will have some stories that are straightforward, straight-on type of storytelling; others may be wilder in terms of layout and page design. We're looking for a real mix, and hopefully each issue I'll be able to get that mix and each issue will have something different, something that will catch people by surprise.

FEATURE: In terms of different types of design, whether in panel layout or in mechanical type vs. hand lettering, is there a point where you feel something ceases to be "comics?"

GOODWIN: Yeah, and I think we'll probably cross back and forth. There will always be a bulk of material that can be called "comics," but we'll do some pieces that will be illustrated stories, some of them just that—a story with illustrations. Some of them will be more heavily illustrated. Yet the bulk of the magazine will be what would generally be called "comics."

FEATURE: Who is the Art Director on *Epic*?

GOODWIN: We don't have anyone with the title of Art Director. Nora Maclin functions as designer on the magazine, with a lot of input from me. Her title is Design Director, and she'll handle most of the non-comics type of material.

I have my own opinions on design for a magazine. I went to the School of Visual Arts in New York and then worked for about five years on *Redbook* magazine in their art department. But on *Epic*, Nora and I will work together in that area.

FEATURE: You studied commericial art?

GOODWIN: Yes. I once took a cartooning course. When I came to New York I was going to write and draw comics, but I found whereas the writing I got into right away, I probably would have labored long and hard for about ten or fifteen years before I would have become good enough to draw comics.

FEATURE: Considering the higher demands of putting together a full color magazine like *Epic*, will you be using the same production department as for the other Marvel magazines?

GOODWIN: No. First, we'll be working with different color separators. And we'll also be using a different printing outfit. It won't be done at Sparta (laughter).

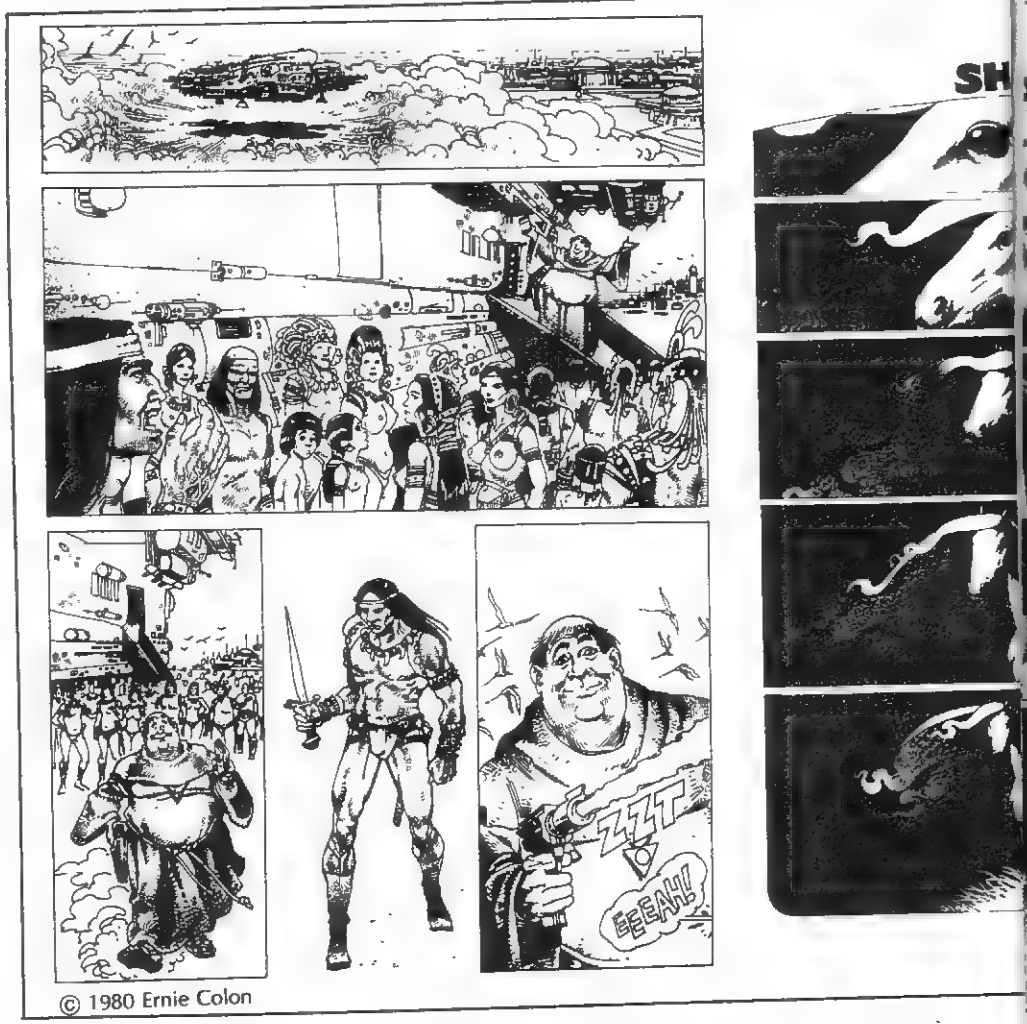
FEATURE: Since the creators working on a story for *Epic* are only selling first publication rights, will they have more creative freedom?

GOODWIN: I think they'll have a lot more freedom. They're creating their own characters which they'll retain the rights to. They'll be able to do their own things. For example, someone may do an eight page story for *Epic*, and go on to use the character in other ways.

FEATURE: Given that added freedom for the creators, do you foresee having conflicts, as an editor asking for revisions, with a creator deciding s/he doesn't want to make those changes?

GOODWIN: Well, that's one of the areas where you function as an editor. You try to influence what people are doing. I'll try to talk over what the creator is doing before anyone actually does anything. I'll try to give my input then and look at the material as I go along. I think you reach a point where either they trust your judgment, or we'll talk and maybe I'll go along with them. It's not a case of doing a lot of after-the-fact editing. That may happen with some of the material where I'm dealing with something Rick Marschall purchased.

FEATURE: On the material you purchase yourself, then, you'll be working very closely with the creators...



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GOODWIN: Sure. The whole point is that you're doing a magazine with enough freedom that you shouldn't have to make as many changes. It should all be settled beforehand. If I'm buying a certain story or a certain approach from someone, I pretty much know in advance what I'm buying. It shouldn't be necessary further down the line for me to look at it and say, "Gee, this isn't commercial enough," or something like that because generally we're dealing with a short piece. There will be other things in the magazine....

FEATURE: Would you consider running a story which would take, for example, 25% of an issue, or would you serialize it?

GOODWIN: I'm probably going to do both. It's a little awkward to begin with since the magazine is quarterly. We have "Metamorphosis Odyssey," a serial by Jim Starlin, which was conceived to be done in eight page monthly chapters. Since the decision was made to make the book a quarterly instead of a monthly, what I did for the first issue was to run the first three chapters. Originally I was considering just running two, but when I read through the third chapter, I liked the point at which it ended. So I'm running the first three.

"The success or failure of a magazine like this really depends on the...individual contributors."

We'll also be having an adaptation of (Robert E. Howard's) Almuric by Roy Thomas and Tim Conrad, and that's going to have to run in large chunks. It makes it a little hard for me juggling beforehand, but I think it's worth it to have extra long material in there, too. Until the magazine is published monthly, however, I won't be having as much continuing material. I'll try to limit that and probably won't run a lot of long pieces, but I will definitely run some.

FEATURE: How different will the Almuric adaptation be in *Epic* than if it were run in *Savage Sword of Conan?*

GOODWIN: With that particular material, it may be a little more faithful to Robert E. Howard. The sex and violence will probably be untampered with. Originally they were thinking of running it in a regular color comic, not in *Savage Sword*, and under the Comics Code, it might have been changed somewhat. Also in *Epic*, the adaptation will be in full process color, as opposed to four-color.

FEATURE: Similarly, how will the *Epic* Silver Surfer differ from the Silver Surfer of the regular color comics?

GOODWIN: It's different mostly in terms that Stan wrote it as a short story. It will only be in the first issue, and won't be continuing. There are no fight scenes. I think had we done it in a color comic, somewhere along the line you'd have to have a fight scene or a chase. It's essentially a mood sort of story.

FEATURE: Are there any plans to use other Marvel characters?

GOODWIN: I don't have any plans for it right now. Judging by what type of reaction we get to the Surfer piece, it's possible that later on we might do a piece like that.

FEATURE: What changes, if any, have you made with the material which Rick Marschall purchased?

GOODWIN: With some of the material Rick purchased, I might make some changes, but I wouldn't make any major changes. I did a lot of rejuggling of our material in the first issue. I think that at the point where Rick was fired he only had a tentative line-up of his own, anyway. I don't know how firm he was. I juggled quite a bit of material, like with the "Metamorphosis Odyssey." I think Rick was planning on running just one chapter, or two; I made the decision to run three. There was also some illustrated fiction that he planned to run that I pushed back to another issue just because with the first issue I wanted to hit a little heavier with comics. It's all very subjective. There's no doubt in my mind that the first issue, whether edited by Rick or me, will probably do reasonably well. It may do very well. We're hoping it will do very well.

FEATURE: Is there any material which Rick Marschall purchased which you

THE VICTOR
WHAT'S WITH YOU, MAN?
HAVE NO HAPPY NESS!
HERE IT IS, HAPPINESS!
AND WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH OUT HER?
CARRY MY
HAPPY NESS WITH ME
© 1980 Strip Art Features

wouldn't have purchased?

GOODWIN: I'd rather not say because it doesn't reflect on the persons who did it, and it doesn't necessarily reflect on Rick, or on me. It's just that I'm a different editor and there are different judgments I would have made. We each have our own subjective outlooks. I would have purchased some different things than he did, but I also would have purchased a lot of the things he did purchase.

FEATURE: You mentioned that all of the material will be of a science fiction or fantasy nature. If you were approached with a good western or mystery story would you run it in *Epic*?

GOODWIN: No, I'd turn it down.

FEATURE: So you wouldn't include other types of material because it wouldn't fit in with the basic theme of *Epic*?

GOODWIN: I think Rick originally conceived the magazine, back when it was to be called *Odyssey*, as covering a broader expanse of material. Rick, I think, wanted to include a little bit of everything. But *Epic* will concentrate on science fiction and fantasy material.

FEATURE: Are you happy with the quarterly schedule?

GOODWIN: Not wildly. Although it would probably kill me, I'd rather have a monthly schedule. In theory, the quarterly schedule gives you more time to put the material together, but there's never enough time as far as I'm concerned, to do it exactly the way you want to do it. If I had a year to do a magazine, I'm sure I would still be rushing some stuff off at the last minute, and wishing there was something else I could have had, or some little thing I could have done, or something I could have read over one more time. A magazine should be an organic, growing kind of thing, and I think a monthly, or at least a more frequently scheduled magazine, gives it a better chance of being that.

My approach would be a lot looser if it were a monthly magazine. But when it's a quarterly, I find myself much more uptight about what's in each issue. With a quarterly you only have four shots each year, and God help you if one out of four falls off in some way. Then you're really hurting. With a monthly magazine if you have mostly good issues, then if you fall off on a issue, that's okay. That's one of the nice things about a monthly magazine.

FEATURE: Whose decision was it to make *Epic* a quarterly instead of a monthly?

GOODWIN: I don't know specifically. I assume it was probably higher up in the management level and they felt that if they were going to spend this much money on a magazine—and compared to any other Marvel comic coming out, it is a big budget—I think they wanted to see what kind of results they would get with that big a commitment before just plunging in. With a monthly magazine you'd have to do about six issues before you're really even sure how the first issue did. And that's a tremendous investment. By making it quarterly it gives them a chance to see how the magazine is doing with a four issue investment. In terms of the company's money I understand why they've made the decision.

FEATURE: With a quarterly schedule, though, you have to be much more conscious of getting a balance of material...

GOODWIN: Yeah. The balance in a monthly magazine wouldn't be as grave as with a quarterly. In the first issue, frankly, there was one piece I didn't have: that was a good, really solid science fiction, dueling space ships kind of piece. I have some material that can kind of pass as that kind of science fiction but I would have really liked one solid science fiction piece for the first issue. It just hadn't been done or hadn't been commissioned beforehand, and there was no time for me suddenly to commission one. But if it were a monthly magazine, there would be some issues which wouldn't be balanced but it wouldn't matter as much because with a monthly book you can do a theme issue, or something like that. There's a lot of things you can do with a monthly schedule.

FEATURE: How independent are you in choosing what will go in the magazine and who will work for the magazine?

GOODWIN: I'm reasonably independent. It's really hard to say. I'm sure that if there is something I pick which Stan violently objects to, since Stan is listed on the masthead as editor-in-chief and publisher, ultimately it probably wouldn't be used. However I think I have a good enough working relationship with Stan, and he trusts my judgment, so that even if I picked something he didn't like, I think he'd go along with me anyway. If over a long period of time I consistently picked a lot of material he didn't like, then I think they'd probably look around for a new editor. And I think they probably should.

FEATURE: Which issue will have the complete Archie Goodwin stamp?

GOODWIN: I don't think any of the first four issues will bear the Archie Goodwin stamp totally. I'm not even sure what the Archie Goodwin stamp is! There will be material that Rick was committed to through the fourth issue. And again, a lot of it would probably be material that I would use or I would have picked anyway.

When you're getting people to do material which is copyrighted in their own names, a lot of the stamp on the magazine is going to come from the individual pieces. Like I said, I'll try to talk over material with people to give

"What I'm looking for is material that has something visually spectacular."

some input, but by and large, it's more a case of directing people a little bit towards what you'd like to see, or finding a submission that fits what you'd like. But generally, I think a lot of what the magazine will be will depend very much on the individual contributors and what they come up with. You can exercise your own judgment in saying, "Yes, I want this. No, I don't want that." But to a great extent, the success or failure of a magazine like this really depends on the kind of submissions I'll be getting. A lot of the magazine's personality will come from what the individual person does.

from those fields in addition to people known generally for their comic book work?

GOODWIN: To a certain extent, sure. I think Rick, since he's more heavily into strips, would have sought out more people from comic strips. Having done comic strips, my tendency might be to think, "Oh, gee. I'd like to get Milton Caniff and he's probably too busy!" Al Williamson and I did *Secret Agent Corrigan* together and I'm definitely after Al to do something for *Epic*. However, until he gets *The Empire Strikes Back* done, he won't

who aren't in the good graces of the regular Marvel comics be given consideration in *Epic*?

GOODWIN: Sure. If somebody comes in and shows me something that looks good and I like it, I'd go with it.

FEATURE: Are you planning on using much foreign material in Epic?

GOODWIN: We're using work by Mirko Ilic and I have feelers out to other people. But right at the moment I don't have any other foreign material lined up. It's one of the lacks I feel in the first issue, and probably the next couple of issues. I'd like to have a little

FEATURE: Are you soliciting specific stories, topics or people, or are you swamped with submissions?

GOODWIN: Both. Ever since *Epic* was announced, we've gotten a lot of unsolicited submissions and we'll probably continue to get those. We have enough material on hand or in the works to cover most of the first four issues, and if I okay any new material, it will probably be by seeking people out individually.

FEATURE: As someone who's written both comic strips and science fiction prose, will you be soliciting people

be able to. But sure, I'll be looking around for people from all different areas.

FEATURE: Will the regular Marvel personnel have first preference for use in *Epic*?

GOODWIN: No. They probably have easier access to me, just to present material. But we'll be using people who have never worked for Marvel before, people who have worked for Marvel a long time, people who have worked for *Heavy Metal*, people who have never worked for *Heavy Metal*.

FEATURE: Conversely, will people

more overseas material.

FEATURE: Any particular reason why?

GOODWIN: Just because I feel it should be that kind of magazine. I think *Epic* should reflect what worldwide comics are like, not just what American comics are like.

FEATURE: Are there plans to adapt science fiction or fantasy stories in comics form?

GOODWIN: Perhaps in the future. I would rather approach a science fiction or fantasy author with the idea of writing a short story that can be given

"I think *Epic* should reflect what worldwide comics are like, not just what American comics are like."

to an artist to adapt, since I doubt if they'd be interested in writing a script. As a matter of fact, Samuel Delany and Howard Chaykin are working on an eight page story for the second issue. That one Delany will actually script from an original story.

FEATURE: Are there plans to run excerpts of coming comic book novels?

GOODWIN: Yes. I ran an excerpt from *Elfspire*, a fantasy novel from Ariel press; and then we'll be doing a large excerpt—about half the book—from Craig Russell and Roy Thomas' adaptation of Michael Moorcock's Elric, *The Dreaming City*.

FEATURE: Will these excerpts be complete units, or simple previews?

GOODWIN: I'd like to have them, if not totally complete, then at least a kind of unit. One of the things I'll try to do when I'm excerpting is to make it clear that it is an excerpt, and tell a little about it. When *Heavy Metal* ran an excerpt of the *Alien* adaptation that Walt Simonson and I did, they were originally going to run three chapters, and I guess they figured it was close enough to publication time that they'd only do two. It was just sort of...there. You got to the end of the eight pages and there was no "to be continued" or "look for *Heavy Metal*'s complete version of *Alien*." You turned the page and found a subscription ad or something. Hopefully, we'll be a little clearer about things like that in *Epic*. But if it's the right thing, if it's something I think is really nice and worth having, I'd definitely excerpt it.

FEATURE: Moving on to the non-comics material, will you be using many text features or columns?

I AM A STRANGER TO UNTRUTH. MINE IS THE POWER ABSOLUTE. GALACTUS HAS NO CAUSE TO LIE.
THEN JOIN ME IN THE QUEST. LET US SEE WHAT LIES BEYOND THE COSMOS. ONLY WE CAN FIND THE ANSWER.
THERE IS NO ANSWER.
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GOODWIN: I won't be doing any real columns. As long as the magazine is quarterly I won't be having any reviews or anything like that, either. We'll have an editorial page, letters page, and contributors' page. A lot of the same features you'll find in a regular magazine. There will also be text features.

FEATURE: Will these features be fact or fiction, or both?

GOODWIN: Both. The first issue doesn't really have an article, but later on I'll be running articles on comics and related fields.

FEATURE: What happened to the Maurice Horn article on European comics that was slated for the first issue?

GOODWIN: By the time I got the copyright permissions from overseas, I was right up against the wire and had to substitute a comics piece. That article will appear in the second issue.

FEATURE: Do you see *Epic*, through articles such as that, introducing the American readers to other comics work being done around the world?

GOODWIN: Possibly. I think that *Heavy Metal* has, at this point, already introduced a lot of European art to people. But hopefully, we'll find some people they're not using.

FEATURE: What type of prose fiction are you looking for?

GOODWIN: I'd rather see the fiction done in some kind of heavily illustrated form or as actual comics. My tendency, if I have a real preference, is towards articles. But again, Rick commissioned several fiction pieces and I'll be running those.

FEATURE: One final question. You mentioned before that you would turn down a good western or mystery story because it doesn't fit in with *Epic*'s theme. If *Epic* is successful, would you be interested in doing a companion magazine devoted to adventure stories?

GOODWIN I'd be interested because there is a lot of that material that I like. But it's all premature at this point to even think about it. What we want to do is concentrate on making *Epic* a very good magazine and having it succeed. ■

Guilty Fantasies

by Peter B. Gillis

One of the biggest obstacles I've been facing in getting this column started is the fact that, since I write stories for Marvel Comics, I'm considered a pro, as opposed to a fan. And that gives rise to—well, let me start with a couple of stories.

Story 1. There was a time when there was basically only one Comic Art Convention a year in New York City (as opposed to now, when there seems to be one a month). That was Phil Seuling's July Con, and this was The Kid's second or third time attending. He had made the rounds of the Huckster Room and bought some of the old Marvels he'd wanted. He'd seen some of the people who had previously been just names on paper: Roy Thomas! Jim Steranko! Neal Adams! But now he stood outside the Grand Ballroom, staring into space, and burning.

The Kid had been in a clustered crowd listening to Roy Thomas talk about *The Avengers.* Roy was friendly, witty, willing to answer all the questions put to him. The Kid had asked some, and had been answered, which was a thrill: to have actually talked to a Marvel pro! But after, as The Kid stood, listening, he found he wanted to say something to Roy: something that began with *I,* or with *I am. I am, Roy!* But he realized that even though Roy was not standoffish in the least, The Kid couldn't come out with one of those sentences. He then got an autograph, and afterwards stood in the middle of everything, burning.

The Kid was, good guess, me.

Story 2. Last year, a party was being held at Chris Claremont's apartment. It was still in the formative stages as yet, and there were comic book and non-comic book people there, and to simplify things, Bonnie Claremont had us go around the room, raising our hands and identifying ourselves. We did so: since comic book people tend to show up fairly early at parties, there was a preponderance of people who said "Hi, I write funny books" or "Hi, I'm a letterer for Marvel" or similar things. Then one person (I forget exactly who) said sort of sheepishly, "Oh, I'm nobody. I'm just a fan."

I felt like hitting him.

This column is not going to be a Pro speaking to Fans, and it is definitely not going to be a Somebody speaking to Nobodies. And it's not going to be a pro running around saying, "Oh, I'm still a fan at heart" because it's as good as saying, "Well, gee, I'm just a nobody like the rest of you, really." In the future I want to do some wide-ranging and, I hope, fun things with this column, but in this inaugural piece I want to punch a few holes in a few barriers.

Why is it that every comic book fan has this desire to work in comics? Many fans have sublimated and/or repressed the urge, but I've never come across any fan who didn't at one time want to write or draw for Marvel or DC or Warren or whatever. And this is a phenomenon that is largely restricted to comic books: in SF fandom, there are large numbers of fans (especially older ones) who are perfectly content to go to conventions, meet their compatriots and party around. Few SF fans go around suggesting story ideas to Gordon Dickson or Isaac Asimov. (There *are,* of course, fans who want to break into the writing of SF, but for a large portion of them, it's because they have a general urge to *write* that isn't specifically SF-oriented.) And fans of Harold Robbins or Jacqueline Susann do not try to write like them: they're perfectly willing to let the producers produce, and get off on the results.

But in comics, if you're heavily into them, you come up with all these ideas for stories, you kibitz the authors, you try to create your own heroes and villains, you want to *get in on the action.* And if you don't, if you're too young or not talented enough (or not yet talented enough) to get in on it, you're an outsider. A nobody.

Why? Why is there this impulse? What is it about comics that makes us want to contribute, to put our own two cents in? (If it weren't for that pressure, I would never have ended up at Marvel, nor would most of the people up there now.) Why do *you* want to be where *I* am?(Actually, you might not want to be in a messy apartment on the South Side of Chicago crouched over a typewriter, but I was speaking metaphorically.)

I think a clue can be found in the comics themselves. Comics fandom is centered almost exclusively around superheroes: horror, western, and other kinds of comics can be appreciated and relished, but they are peripheral things compared to superhero/adventure strips. And it's not that superhero books are Colorful, Exciting, and Wholesome Good Fun either: it's the figures of the superheroes that draw us in.

And what are the things we want to see done with these characters that

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Peter B. Gillis is a doctoral candidate in literature and a teaching assistant at the University of Chicago, and a professional comics scripter whose work has appeared in Marvel comics.

attract us so strongly? We want to see them exercise their super-powers, certainly: seeing the Hulk pound the earth and having tanks and soldiers go flying is gratifying, but that sort of thing only goes so far. What comic book publishers have known ever since the 1940s, and *All-Star Comics* and *World's Finest*, is that we love to see superheroes meet and team up, and even fight to see who's the strongest. The most popular comics among us fans were and are *The Avengers*, *The X-Men*, *Justice League of America*, and *Legion of Super-Heroes*. These were the pantheon books: they struck a chord in us; they were the big wish-fulfillment books, and still are. How many letters have been written saying, "So-and-so should become an Avenger," or "So-and-so should be admitted to the JLA," or "Have I got an idea for a new Legionnaire! His name's Potato Salad Lad..."?

I'll make a confession to the effect that, in addition to being a pro, I'm also an academic. I'm currently working on a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago in medieval literature. And in my studies I read a book called *Anatomy of Criticism* by Northrop Frye. (I say all this because I always like, as an academic, to credit my sources.) In it, Frye makes a very useful distinction between the tragic and the comic (or *comedic*) modes of writing. The tragic mode involves the story of man's isolation from the society around him, while the comedic or comic mode involves man's integration into the surrounding society. That makes sense: most tragedies end in death, while comedies tend to end up with marriages, reunions, unexpected inheritances and so forth. When you apply this distinction to our beloved comic books, you find that tragedy is almost nonexistent, and that practically all the developments that we as fans love are comic ones, processes of integration. "Let so-and-so become an Avenger": we want more and more integration; we want our favorite character to join in. The superhero group represents our comedic society, and we want it to become as large, as colorful, and as desirable as possible.

Marvel Comics tended to extend that even further: it wasn't just the Justice League of America, it was a greater structure, a greater family. The Avengers knew the Fantastic Four, the Fantastic Four knew the Inhumans, the X-Men knew the Avengers and so on. The comedic society wasn't just the Big Group, but the whole Marvel Universe. While at DC the villains were throw-

BY THE GREAT HAMAN EGZ!
... A FULL ARMADA OF ALIEN INVADERS!
RULED BY A COSMIC GODHEAD!!
this a continued story for sure...
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aways with a few exceptions (one arch-foe per superhero, and a couple of deals like the Flash's Rogues' Gallery), at Marvel even the two-bit villains returned and returned, and were part of the society.

One of the things that made Marvel's popularity skyrocket until it surpassed DC's was this greater universe, this bigger comedic society, in which everyone belonged. Everyone. And when Marvel, in 1972 or thereabouts started expanding its line with more off-the-beaten-track stuff like *Werewolf by Night* and *Doc Savage*, the pressure would not let up until they were incorporated into the Marvel Universe as well.

This integration was what excited us the most: this wonderful pantheon, this society of exciting figures, growing bigger and more diverse all the time—naturally we wanted in! This is what makes comics so different from science fiction and fantasy fiction. Fantasy and SF create worlds to explore, it's true, but the worlds are almost always well-rounded, complete, with boundaries, and therefore are set at a distance from us. We're always aware of the sort of picture frame around any world in a novel; we always are aware of the artist's hand, the theme of the work and so on.

But the comics—! If someone had tried deliberately, he couldn't have come up with a better term than *comic* books for them. They're completely unbounded; there's no picture frame; and everything's a constant process of coming Inside, of being Included. And this struck our yearnings. This was what we wanted so very, very much.

And somewhere along the line Stan Lee managed to mirror this whole process in creating the myth, the image of the Marvel Bullpen. It was, when you come down to it, the same thing as the Marvel Universe: we found ourselves writing lists of the Marvel writers, artists, and letterers (those of us that got into lists) as often as lists of characters. The Marvel Madmen were another part of the Marvel Universe, another One Big Happy Family that could be joined. (EC in its prime did the same thing: little pages in the books with caricatures of the writers and artists, all cavorting and having a good time. I suspect that this was an unspoken part of being an EC fan, even though its books had no continuing characters: you followed the exploits of Wally Wood, Al Williamson and Jack Davis.) Was it any wonder that we all wanted to join that Family? And is it any wonder that those of us who have made it *in*, into that family, enjoy much more status than simply that of a talented man or woman whose work you admire? And is it any wonder that people feel they are "only" fans? Being a pro is like being an Avenger (which is one of the reasons why I, who have not done all that much work for Marvel, can still be mobbed at conventions, and have my autograph asked for. If I were an SF author with only a couple of short stories under my belt and no reputation, I would be nowhere. But in comics, it doesn't really matter what I've done: I'm an Avenger; I'm Part Of The Family; I'm *in*.).

I don't really know what to say after analyzing this phenomenon. The Marvel Universe, and the DC Universe as well, are attractive and seductive things, with beauties of their own; and writing comics is fun as well as rewarding. In other words, it is nice to be *in*. But the world is bigger, if not more attractive, than comic books, and there's really no reason to think of oneself as *out*. In fact, there are important reasons *not* to think of oneself as *out*: the hour is late, and we're in this Whole Mess together, and often our only defense against the dark is each other. I don't have to tell you not to be ashamed of comics; they approach art, and I think, on occasion, have achieved it. However, you should also not be ashamed to be somewhat detached from the comics you enjoy. Remember that these myths are just that—myths—and that if you say "I'm only a fan" around me, you just might get punched.

More lighthearted banter next issue. See you then. ■

The Legi of Super- Then a

by Mike Flynn

Quick: what has fifty arms (more or less), about the same number of arms and legs, weird looking costumes, a formerly wealthy financier for a patron, and more internal inconsistency than a stoned Lewis Carroll caterpillar? The Legion of Super-Heroes, of course.

You're surprised? You hardly should be, if, for instance, you were a fan of the "old" X-Men, or a Justice Society fan from the days of the Golden Age of Comics, because the Legion of Super-Heroes has suffered exactly the same problem: the passage of time. The only thing that does not change is that everything changes, and it seems the comic book business is highly susceptible to that mutability.

Otto Binder wrote the first story about the Legion (*Adventure* #247). In that initial story, Superboy is approached for membership in a club of teenaged superheroes from the 30th century. Superboy accepts the invitation and thereby establishes a pattern linking the Legion and Superboy which has continued throughout the series' various stints in one comic title or another until the present. The latest addition to editor Mort Weisinger's supporting cast of the Superman Family, the Legion became so popular that Weisinger replaced *Adventure*'s backup feature with one solely devoted to the Legion of Super-Heroes.

You could hardly forget their roots, though. The Legion's position as an interconnected part of Weisinger's Superman "legend" was emphasized in the first story of the new series (*Adventure* #300). A humanoid robot is sent to the future to destroy the Legionnaires. It wears a mask, behind which the Legionnaires expect to find a face. Indeed there *is* a face, which looks like that of an adult Lex Luthor, arch enemy of the adult Superboy. Opening a panel in the robot's "chest," they discover tapes clearly marked: "Hate Superboy," "Hate Cosmic Boy," "Hate, hate, hate."

Another 20th century character appears in this story, as well — Mon-El, the boy trapped in the Phantom Zone, who joins the club.

The link between Superboy's 20th century and the Legion's 30th century is explored further as the series progressed. They battled Lex Luthor in *Adventure* #325, met Dev-Em, the reformed Knave from Krypton in #320, and encountered the 30th century

Mike Flynn is the publisher of The Legion Outpost, *a magazine devoted to the Legion of Super-Heroes.*

he gion of -Heroes and Now

descendent of Mxyzptlk in #310. Supergirl also joined the Legion in a "red kryptonite" story wherein she had split into two beings, one of whom was evil. She runs into another cloud of red kryptonite in the time travel dimension in #334, at which point she loses her memory and helps the Legionnaires as "Unknown Lad." And it was a cloud of green kryptonite in *Adventure* #350 that forces Supergirl and Superboy to forsake the 30th century for a while.

The most notable aspect of the early Legion stories is how much they reflect the editorial philosophy of Mort Weisinger. Although he sometimes became infatuated with concepts of dubious worth (the Phantom Zone and rainbow variants of kryptonite, for examples), as an editorial director, he knew no equal. Jim Shooter, now editor-in-chief at Marvel, made his first sales in comics to Weisinger. Shooter says he runs Marvel "to publish the best, most entertaining comics we can." This philosophy, consciously or unconsciously, comes from Weisinger. In retrospect, having seen an "Age of Relevance" in comics in the early 1970s (while the Legion was not being published), most of Weisinger's entertainments may appear silly, but they certainly didn't to the readers.

In fact, at least with the Legion, Weisinger was ahead of the rest of National in certain respects, and as close to Marvel as possible. Even in the early stories, Weisinger's writers, Jerry Siegel, Edmond Hamilton and sometimes Otto Binder, would introduce small bits that seemed out of the DC time-space continuum. The most notable example is *Adventure* #332's "The Super Moby Dick of Space." In this story, Lightning Lad's arm is poisoned by a gigantic space creature. The poison's strength is so great that it forces the amputation of his arm. For a time he is driven by an understandable bitterness until, as must always happen in a Weisinger story, he comes to his senses. For DC comics at the time, such a serious injury was unusual. More strangely, perhaps, at the end of this story, Lightning Lad still has no arm of his own but a robotic prosthesis instead.

No Legionnaire has ever wanted to chuck it all because his super-power was useless a la Spider-Man. However, in *Adventure* #301, we learn that Bouncing Boy (whose power really *is* ludicrous) had to try several times before being accepted into the Legion of Super-Heroes. Even the Legion of Substitute Heroes, comprised of Legion rejects, gives a slant on the topic of heroism and courage peculiar to the strip. The Substitute Heroes had to

come to grips with their inadequacies and survived, although each at one time had chosen not to continue.

Things changed radically in the strip around 1966, with the last few stories written by Siegel and Hamilton, and especially with the work of Jim Shooter. Shooter was an anomaly in professional comics at the time. At thirteen, he had made his first sale to a company known mainly for its staff outlook and stodgy storylines. Shooter's first published story introduced three Legionnaires and an alien empire attempting to invade Earth in a credible manner. It was also a two-part story. While there had been four such stories written previously, Shooter brought to the Legion a particular style of two-part story, very similar to that of the Marvel two or multi-parters of the day, and which definitely displayed many similarities to the plot-interweaved-with-subplot style then familiar to Marvel readers. The only difference is that Shooter's stories were always tied up within two books. None dragged on longer than that. In contrast, consider the Brainiac 5-goes-nutso subplot in the new series which took more space than it deserved. When Shooter took over, characters no longer seemed interchangeable in outlook: some, although far from all of them, began to become recognizable just from characterization. Prime among these was Invisible Kid who, before then might as well have been invisible all the time. He became the Legion's leader and we soon learned that he, too, displayed a courage that we soon learned was possessed by all his teammates.

Until *Adventure* #367, the Legion had a *club* house. It was an inverted yellow rocketship with red tail fins and a sign over the door proudly announcing it to be the "Super-Hero Clubhouse." Nobody had a *right* to join. In fact, several stories opened with various characters applying for membership, most of whom were played for sight gags: "Eye-ful Ethel" (with eyes all around her head) and "Antennae Boy" (who could pick out radio signals throughout time and space) are two examples. However, the Legionnaires also put up with hoaxes, such as a newsman who wanted to join in order to write an article entitled, "I Was A Legionnaire," imposters who usually joined to try to destroy the Legion, such as Vorm of the Space Pirate Pack in *Adventure* #330-31, or fools such as Lester Spiffany, who wanted to buy his way into the Legion. In later years these interviews were dispensed with and most new heroes had passed some sort of preliminary test (such as Ferro Lad, Karate Kid, Princess Projectra and Nemesis Kid in *Adventure* #346) or were asked to join as they met (Shadow Lass in *Adventure* #367).

Cary Bates, during his stint as regular writer, chose all three methods. Wildfire first displayed his powers to the Legionnaires in *Superboy* #195, but was turned down only to join later when the Legionnaires discovered he had not sacrificed his life on the planet Manna 5. In *Superboy* #201 we were introduced to Porcupine Pete, Infectious Lass and Molecule Master, all of whom were from the old school of Legion applicants. The former two were possessors of ludicrous abilities,

and the latter was sent to infiltrate the Legion in order to kill them. However, Bates handled these newer applicants as if they were people as well; this technique, however, has not become a trend. The last four people invited to join the Legion, in fact, were ex-Legionnaires Saturn Girl, Lightning Lad, Bouncing Boy and Duo Damsel. Tyroc, the token black Legionnaire, was asked to join after a team of Legionnaires saw him in action, and Dawnstar was recruited from the Legion's Super-Hero Academy by their patron, R.J. Brande.

That Academy points to the major difference between the old Legion and the new one. The Legion had been a club; after *Adventure* #367 it was an organization with its own headquarters. In the past, it wasn't too difficult to think of the Legion as a small outfit, with its misguided missile for a command center, even after realizing that all that paraphernalia had to fit in somewhere (and in *Adventure* #348 Shooter revealed a limited underground complex, the result of the theft of the exostructure of the clubhouse by Dr. Zaxton Regulus). It was revealed that Legionnaires receive a living allowance (*Action* #381). Is it from their patron, Brande, or from the United Planets, a kind of U.N. of Space, which seems to run things like *Star Trek*'s Federation, and paid to rebuild their clubhouse after its first destruction in *Adventure* #366? (That was at the hands of the Fatal Five. The most recent time that the clubhouse was destroyed, a being of hate named Omega, spawn of the temporarily insane mind of Brainiac 5, was responsible.) The point is that with all that money and governmental influence, the Legion can no longer be considered a club.

Changes in the strip manifest themselves most easily in the way their own book is now handled. The Legion used to be a distinctly different feature at DC, while at the same time maintaining its status as part of the Superman Family. Now it is treated no differently than the rest of the line, and, for the most part, there is still ambivalence about its connection to the Superman Family. Recently, the book was split off from *Superboy*, although the numbering continues *Superboy*'s. The book's current scripter, Gerry Conway, used the old Superman foe, Brainiac, in #227. What little time travel still used in the strip is usually made to the 20th century. The most startling evidence is DC's decision to set the *Karate Kid* spinoff book in 20th century Metropolis.

Is it bad to have the Legionnaires in the 20th century? Not necessarily, but no major commitment has yet been made as was during Weisinger's editorial tenure toward including or excluding the rest of the Superman Family. To be sure, the rest of the DC multiverse was brought in only occasionally: the Legionnaires sought help against their computer foe, Computo, in *Adventure* #341 and found it in the Batcave (Computo was also created by Brainiac 5; it seems a prerequisite of the strip for Brainiac 5 to create a menace every few hundred stories), and they met the 30th century descendents of the Flash in *Adventure* #373. But, astonishingly, they have never met a member of the Green Lantern Corps, although the

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Legionnaires have traversed the galaxy and farther, and called upon heroes of other worlds when the Earth was threatened by the Sun Eater in *Adventure* #352. They have met members of a group called the Controllers, whose function is similar to that of the Guardians of the Universe. They sort of babysit self-assigned space sectors, making sure that no one blows himself up. One of these Controllers was in charge of Earth but grew incensed when his domain was removed from him and revenged himself by setting the Sun-Eater against Earth. A second was unmasked as the Time Trapper in a recent tabloid comic. For defeating the first renegade Controller, the Controllers bestowed a Miracle Machine on the Legionnaires.

The strip has changed, too, in that the Legionnaires no longer look like kids. In the stories in the 1960s, many of the Legionnaires still lived with their parents. Now those that aren't married practically live with each other. (Here is another aspect of the new headquarters: a dormitory wing in which the Legion members can stay.) Sex seems to sell the Legion as much as anything now. Revealing costumes are the norm for Legionnaires nowadays, from new members Tyroc and Dawnstar to staider folk like Princess Projectra and Cosmic Boy.

One aspect of the strip that has generally remained strong, however, is its internal consistency. That has slid a little in the newer series: prime example of the neglect is the anachronism of racism in the Tyroc stories in a universe populated by people not only of varied hue, but diverse shape, and not always a humanoid one. Second is the absurdity of allowing Brainiac 5 to rejoin the Legion despite the seemingly minor detail that he is a cold-blooded murderer. But the choice of the Legionnaire to go whacko — Brainiac 5 — makes sense. It followed established continuity for Lightning Lad and Saturn Girl to rejoin after marriage, and for Duo Damsel and Bouncing Boy to decline. It made sense for Ultra Boy to be framed as a murderer: he had framed himself in *Adventure* #316. And a peripheral supporting cast has continued to pop up, effectively for the most part: the Controllers, the United Planets, R.J. Brande, the Khunds, and the Dominators. Some things have remained fuzzy: for instance, the President of Earth seems to be a different man in each issue.

There is one great strength to the Legion strip, and that is its built-in conceptual appeal. There are no limits to what it can do in the adventure genre. Writers can draw material from an amazingly wide variety of sources and make it work in the Legion context. Edmond Hamilton rewrote "Mutiny on the Bounty" for the Legion (*Adventure* #319), Jim Shooter, "The Most Dangerous Game" (*Adventure* #369) and "The Odyssey," and Paul Levitz, the Lensmen series (*Superboy and the Legion of Superheroes* #s 241-45).

As we begin the 1980s, the Legion will continue to change. With all that potential at the strip's core, the 1980s' Legion series will probably be as similar to and different from this incarnation as the 1970s Legion is to that of the 1960s. For those who long for the old days of the strip, there will be nothing but the new. ■

The Fandom Zone

A complete section of useful information, fanzine reviews and columns geared to you, the involved comics fan

Fandom Origins

by Jerry Bails

The appearance, in March 1961, of Jerry Bails and Roy Thomas' fanzine, Alter-Ego, *is generally regarded as the beginning of comics fandom as we now know it. Here, veteran fan Jerry Bails, reminisces about the early days of fandom and gives us a perspective on the commerciality of fandom today.*

Not long ago, I received in the mail from DC Comics the black and white proofs of Hawkman's tryout in SHOWCASE. That happened once before just at the outset of Comics Fandom. Roy Thomas and I had just begun corresponding, sharing ideas for a new concept that I thought was so original—an amateur publication for and by comics fans. I had just moved to Detroit. A year earlier I had finally completed my colection of *All-Star Comics* by buying the privately bound volumes of the author-creator, Gardner Fox. The year was 1960.

Wow, a lot has happened since. Roy's talents, which were always obvious to me, have become obvious to everyone else. Dozens of fan-friends have become pros: Rich Buckler, Mike Vosburg, Don Glut, Paul Levitz, James Steranko, Marv Wolfman, Len Wein . . .I knew them all when. (Now I'm just waiting for Don Rosa to hit it big.) Fanzines were the route that most of these talented people took to enter pro-dom. I makes me proud to know that it all followed from the introduction of *Alter-Ego,* even though the concept of a fanzine was not original. (Science Fiction Fandom originated the concept back in the 1930s, but Roy and I knew nothing about this when we first discussed the idea. Later, Julie Schwartz introduced us to science fiction fandom via XERO's series "All in Color for a Dime.") By the time *Alter Ego* #1 appeared, there was a momentum building in and among older comics fans that has not yet abated. Of course, the younger fans have continued to feed their "sense of wonder" into Fandom and have kept things young and alive for us old fogies. Sometimes I think older fans would have lost their sense of wonder many times over if not for the younger fans. Nothing thrills me more than to run into an enthusiastic 10 year-old who reminds me of how excited I was at that same age with the appearance of each issue of *All-Star Comics.*

If I regret anything that has happened in Comics Fandom, it is the commercialism. It has soured me on most conventions. I can't stand to hear some dealers brag hours on end about how they managed to screw some little old lady out of her prized collection which they are now asking an arm and a leg for. Howard Rogofsky holds the dubious distinction of being the first in my memory to realize the extent to which comic fans could be exploited. At a time when I was still publishing *The Comicollector,* he had an airmail subscription, and would telegraph orders for every rare old goodie that was advertised until he managed to corner the market and force the prices up. But he was only the first. Once the New York *Times* ran that article in 1963, Fandom has never regained its innocence. I remained the 31 year-old assistant professor at Monteith College in Detroit for five years or so as every newspaper around the world plagiarized from the *Times* article. The only thing that did change was the price of the most valuable comic book. Each article opened with a new and higher bid. I never did know where those freelance "writers" were getting those estimates. I stopped giving out interviews when Walter Cronkite's producer called me, and told me that he would really prefer to interview himself. He was a quick study, and could give himself exactly what he wanted to put on the air. (No lie!) When I declined to be interviewed, he asked me for the name of a New York banker or stock broker who collected *Captain Marvel.* It had to be someone from New York; if it wasn't happening in New York, then it really wasn't happening. It had to be a professional, or there was no shock (news) value, and it had to be *Captain Marvel* he collected, because that was the only strip the producer figured his over-30 TV audience would know. Remembering the slightly colored treatment fans received at the hands of *Newsweek,* I couldn't resist asking Mr. News Producer if it was alright if the collector was married. He paused before he answered. I hung up.

Some of you out there may remember the occasion of the interview that led to the article in *Newsweek.* The reporter showed up on my doorstep on the weekend of the first Alley Tally, a party I threw for about twenty fans. The official reason for the party was to tally the ballots in the third (?) poll taken in Comics Fandom. Maybe it was the second. Memory fails me. I do recall that Don and Maggie Thompson, Roy Thomas, and a slew of fans from Chicago were there. I recall hanging banners christening "The Second Heroic Age of Comics!" (Hey, was Chicago fan, Don Glut, there? Who can recall?)

Well, all that was a long time ago. It was a time when Roy and I suggested the idea of reviving the Atom with Dollman's powers, of reintroducing the Justice Society. I finally convinced Julie to give Kid Flash a distinctive costume, with a mask like Johnny Quick's. We finally did get the Spectre revived, and revived, and revived. The one hundred or so letters I wrote (in varying handwriting, on dozens of typewriters, on sixty kinds of stationery) were mailed from all over the country just after the JLA made their tryout. I have always believed that that is what started Julie's letter columns. Early issues of the JLA are filled with my letters under different names. I'm Robert Lindsay, Bob Cherry, and others I can't recall. I still write letters under false names (I'm Don Wieland in *All-Star* #67.), but I don't think I need to stuff the mailboxes anymore to get the editors to sit up and take notice of fans. We are a power to be reckoned with. Without us, comics certainly would be no less than they are today. (And I'm not talking about the price tag.) ■

Fandom Almanac Conventions

If you are running a convention, or know of one in your area, and would like to be listed in this space, please send all pertinent information to COMICS FEATURE.

Feb. 23-24. NEWCON Part Two. Sheraton-Boston. Guests: Howard Chaykin, Walt Simonson, Marv Wolfman, Terry Austin, Dave Simons. Admission: $3.00/day, $5.00/both days. Contact: Don Phelps, Box 85, Cohassat, MA 02025, (617) 747-0665 or (617) 746-7284.

Feb. 23-24.CREATION. Sheraton Centre, 7th Ave. & 52nd Street, New York. Guests: Many Marvel and DC personnel. Admission: $6.00/day, $11.00/both days. Contact: Creation, 421 7th Ave., Suite 908, NY, NY 10001, (212) 594-7850.

Feb. 24. PAPER PANORAMA. Bonniebrook Ballroom, Detroit. Admission:$1.00. Contact: Silver's Collector's Carnival (313) 356-7427.

Mar. 2. PHIL SEULING'S COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE. Hotel Taft, 7th Ave. & 50th Street, New York. Admission: Free.

Mar. 7-9. WISCON 4. Wisconsin Center & Madison Inn, Madison, WI. Guests: Octavia Butler, Joan Vinge. Admission: $10.00. Contact: SF3, Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701.

Mar. 23. CHICAGO MINI-CON. Pick Congress Hotel, 520 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Admission: 75¢. Contact: Chicago Comicon, 1219a W. Devon, Chicago, IL 60660, (312) 274-1832.

Mar. 23. PHOENIX IV. Masonic Temple, 1119 S.W. Park, Portland, OR. Guests: Steve Adams, Victoria Poiser, Jim LaRue. Contact: Second Genesis, 1314 S.E. Harrison, Portland, OR 97214.

Mar. 29-30. CREATION. Sheraton, Boston. Admission: $5.00/day, $9.00/both days. Contact: Creation, 421 7th Ave., Suite 908, NY, NY 10001, (212) 594-7850.

Apr. 4-6. FOOL-CON III. Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, KS. Guests: Anne McCaffrey, Patricia McKillip, Stephen R. Donaldson, Lee and Pat Killough, Carl Sherell, Paul C. Allen, Jann Frank and Tim Kirk. Admission: $5.00 before Mar. 1, $6.00 after. Contact: Student Activities Office, Johnson County Community College, College Blvd. at Quivira Road, Overland Park, KS 66210, (913) 888-8500.

Apr. 5-7. MIAMI CON III. Holiday Inn, Miami, FL. Guests: C.C. Beck, Wayne Boring, Pat Broderick, John Byrne, Al Kurzrok, and Mike Zeck. Contact: Starship Enterprises, 1788 N.E. 163rd St., North Miami, FL 33162.

Apr. 12-13. CREATION. Cleveland Bond Court Hotel. Admission: $5.00/day, $9.00/both days. Guest: Jim Shooter. Contact: Creation, 421 7th Ave., Suite 908, NY, NY 10001, (212) 594-7850.

Apr. 13. PHIL SEULING'S COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE. Hotel Taft, 7th Ave. & 50th Street, New York. Admission: Free.

Apr. 26-27. CHICAGO MINI-CON. Pick Congress Hotel, 520 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Guests: John Byrne, Max Allan Collins, Tim Conrad, Mike Grell, Paul Kupperberg and Marv Wolfman. Admission: $1.00/day, $1.50/both days. Contact: Chicago Comicon, 1219a W. Devon, Chicago, IL 60660, (312) 274-1832.

Amateur Press Associations

An Amateur Press Association (or "apa" for short) is a sort of limited-circulation fanzine collective; in order to receive copies, one must contribute to them as well. Each member of an apa sends a specified number of copies of their contribution to the Central Mailer, who in turn collates all the memberzines into a collective work and disseminates them to every member. Each apa has its won distinct personality, which is determined by the slant of its subject matter, the minimum required contributions, frequency of publications, the size of its roster, and especially the people who are in it. The contents of any given memberzine in any given apa may consist of a diatribe on a comic book of twenty years ago, to what the individual member ate for breakfast the morning before. Most apas will send you a sample copy for your initial fee so you can get a better idea of what they're all about.

The following is an index of all presently active comics-oriented apas. The information is correct at press time, but is subject to change at any moment. For more information about any of these apas—especially concerning openings in their rosters—contact the Central Mailers listed.

APA—I

The "I" is for Index, and members contribute detailed indexes of issue-by-issue story titles, credits and dates of comics, writer and artist checklists, and others. The emphasis is on comics, but cartoons, films, science fiction/fantasy books and other topics are accepted. For serious data buffs. The roster is all but filled, so write first. Back mailings are available, averaging at $4.00 each.

Minimum Activity: 4 pages every mailing
Frequency: Quarterly
Membership Limit: 20
Initial Fee: $2.00
Central Mailer: Gene Reed
3708 Lakewood Drive
Huntsville, AL 35811

APA—5

This was once among the most literate, interesting comics apas, with nowhere to go but down. Then it went down. A core of dedicated members are pushing to keep APA—5 alive, and they're succeeding. Still a good place for the beginning apan, though its golden age is long gone.

Minimum Activity: 6 pages every three mailings
Frequency: Monthly
Membership Limit: 30
Initial Fee: $1.00
Central Mailer: Mike Bentley
315 East Laurel Street
Bellingham, WA

CAPA—alpha

It has its ups and downs, but k—a was the first and still one of the best of the apas. A long waitlist; expect to wait a year or more before being invited to join, but waitlisters may contribute to and purchase back mailings depending on availability.

Minimum Activity: 4 pages every three mailings
Frequency: Montly
Membership Limit: 40
Intitial Fee: $1.00
Central Mailer: Robert Bronstein
20027-54 Community Street
Winnetka, CA 91306

INTERLAC

Devoted to comics, popular culture, and the Legion of Super-Heroes. Huge 600-page-mailings are not uncommon, and the waitlist is very, very long; you can will your waitlist spot to your descendants. 'LAC is more comics-orientated than most...several comics pros are active members, too.

Minimum Activity: 4 pages every three mailings
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: 50
Initial Fee: $3.00
Central Mailer: Thomas Burkert
P.O. Box 26
Mt. Kisco, NY 10549

NYAPA

Originally the New York Amateur Press Association, but no longer based in New York. Cozy, intimate faanishness just peripherally comics related.

Minimum Activity: 4 pages every two mailings
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: 20
Initial Fee: $1.00
Central Mailer: Greg Swan
555 North Miller
Mesa, AZ 85203

PHOENIX

Another good place for the beginning apan to start. Three years old, and PHOENIX is definitely on the way up. The waitlist is short, but growing.

Minimum Activity: 3 pages every three mailings
Frequently: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: 25
Initial Fee: $2.00
Central Mailer: Alan Turniansky
148 Broadway #3—B
Lynbrook, NY 11563

SFPA

Its subject matter slants toward science fiction, though the initials stand for Southern Fandom Press Alliance, and its membership tends to be concentrated below the Mason-Dixon line. Waitlisters may contribute to a separate section called Shadow—SFPA. A very classy group; not recommended for the inexperienced neofan.

Minimum Activity: 4 pages every two mailings
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: 30
Initial Fee: $2.00
Central Mailer: Guy Lillian III
102 S. Mendenhall #13
Greensboro, NC 27403

VOOTIE

For cartoonists of the funny-animal genre. Enclose samples of your artwork with your initial fee.

Minimum Activity: 1 page every two mailings
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: None
Initial Fee: $1.00
Central Mailer: Larry Becker
3557 26th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55406

WAPA

The Western Amateur Press Association, though not limited exclusively, is a regional comics apa for those living west of the Mississippi. A little over a year old, and still on somewhat shaky ground.

Minimum Activity: 5 pages every six mailings
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: 25
Initial Fee: $3.00
Central Mailer: Mary Gilmore
1880 Termino Avenue #2
Long Beach, CA 90815

Fandom Zone

X—APA
An offshoot of INTERLAC, but for X-Men fans. This one's just starting out; it's a good chance to get in on an apa from the beginning.
Minimum Activity: 4 pages every two mailings
Frequency: Bi-Monthly
Membership Limit: 25
Initial Fee: $4.00
Central Mailer: Jeff Slaten
1330 Gaylord #703
Denver, CO 30206

Apas also come in other shapes, colors and forms. They may be devoted to any subject, including comics, science fiction, music, film, general interest, or any sort of esoteric matters. For a comprehensive catalogue of **all** apas, send 50¢ to Harry Andruschak, 6933 N. Rosemead #31, San Gabriel, CA 91775

OK JECKIE, NEXT ONE! (SLIP-CLIC!)
YEA... NOW, THIS IS US VIBRO-SKIING DOWN THE BELLY OF THE GIANT SLIME BEAST OF DACRON!
WOW!
NEXT SLIDE, JECKIE...
R. BRUNING-77

Comics Clubs

If you belong to a comics club and would like to be listed in this space, please send all pertinent information to COMICS FEATURE.

Fullerton, CA. WEST COAST COMICS CLUB. Meets at Fullerton Science Lecture Hall #121, California State University, 7:00 p.m. Contact: Barry Short, 420 West 4th Street, San Dimas, CA 91773 (714) 599-2488.

Maplewood, N.J. COMICS CLUB MAPLEWOOD. Meets at 29 Norfolk Avenue, 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. Contact: Comic Club Maplewood, P. O. Box 65, Maplewood, NJ 07040.

Phoenix, AZ. PHOENIX COMIC BOOK CLUB. Meets at Quality Inn West, 2420 W. Thomas, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Contact: Neil Cohen, 3824 N. 15th Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85018 (602) 227-8701.

Pittsburgh, PA. PITTSBURGH COMIX CLUB. Meets at Eide's Comix & SF Shop, 11 Federal Street, every second Saturday from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Contact: Ben Pondexter, 827 Anaheim, Pittsburgh, PA 15210.

St. Louis, MO. SPECTOR COMICS CLUB. Meets at Century Bowl, 7508 Michigan, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. Contact: Anthony Gladish, 3917 Ohio Street, St. Louis, MO 63118.

Fandom Press Clippings

The Fanzine Review section will be a regular feature and if you'd like us to review your zine, please send two copies to the editorial address in the front of the magazine. Reviewers this issue are Billy Lightcap, Dean Mullaney and Peter Sanderson.

FANDOM CALENDAR 1980

$2.50 plus 50¢ postage from Weirdo Publishing Company/Smile in the Dark Productions, 315 East Fifth Street, #4A, New York, NY 10003. 8½" x 11", offset on white stock, with cream colored card stock cover.

The idea of a calendar for and by fans is so good that it's surprising no one has done this before. The calendar features a front cover by Wendy Pini, back cover by Rick Taylor, and full pagers for each month by Fred Hembeck, Dave Sim, Kurt Erichsen, Don Rosa, Bill Sherman, Chuck Nanco, Richard Krause, Brad Foster, Mark Heike, Jim Kuzee, Judy Pope and Cara Sherman.

Just about every day in the year is filled with information ranging from the useful (January 5: Pittsburgh Comix Club meeting) to the historical (August 6: Ron Foss' 1963 fanzine *Dateline: Comicdom* starts) to the absurd (July 30: Paleozoic Era ends - 225,000,000 BC).

If you're interested in birthdays (Robert Crumb? Diana Rigg? Joe Orlando? Buffalo Bill Cody?) or would like to impress your friends with the knowledge that "Bean Throwing Night" is February 3rd, the *Fandom Calendar 1980* is for you. We may already be into 1980, but it's still worth having this calendar on your wall. It's a classic piece of fan publishing.—D.M.

Fandom Zone

LOLLAPALOOSA #3

$1.75 plus 25¢ postage from Mitch O'Connell, 5453 N. Lakewood, Chicago, IL 60640. 7" x 10", 52 pp., offset on white paper.

The accent in *Lollapaloosa* is on art, from single illustrations by many popular comics artists, to checklists of their work, to two strips by editor O'Connell.

Most of the pro art appears to be convention sketches, and those represented include Joe Staton, Mike Nasser, Vaughn Bodē, Mike Vosburg, Mike Grell, Fred Hembeck, Jack Kirby and John Buscema (the last two inked by fans). Roy Krenkel and Don Martin have three page "portfolios" each: Krenkel's work seems to be from his notepad (but Krenkel's roughs are art lessons in and of themselves), while Martin gives us a three panel (one per page) display of his bizarre sense of humor.

The artist checklists are of Jim Starlin, Barry Smith, Howard Chaykin, Marshall Rogers, Neal Adams (part two) and Berni Wrightson (part three). The indexes, however, are not complete. O'Connell has searched out obscure appearances of the artists' work in fanzines, non-comics publications and so forth which may be of interest to the collector, and in an attempt to complete his information, asks for reader help in filling the gaps.

© 1979 MITCH O'CONNELL

O'Connell's two strips, one of which features the Batman, show an artist of some promise. Perhaps his strongest point is his inking ability, which while derivative, displays a comfortable pen line. Like many fan artists, O'Connell's pencil and compositional style is very derivative (he models his work after Wrightson and Rogers, it seems), but his art is not as stiff as some.

Also included in the issue is a single article, "EC Comics: the Cause of Juvenile Delinquency?" which rehashes the Wertham-EC connection.

Lollapaloosa is a nice attempt at an artzine, but it has its flaws. —B.L.

GRATIS #4

50¢ for sample copy, or $1.25 for four issues from Gratis Publications, 36 Ivy Green Cres., Scarborough, Ontario, Canada M1G 2Z3. Editor: Jim Shedden. 5½" x 8½", 20 pp., offset on white paper, with Neal Adams cover on red stock.

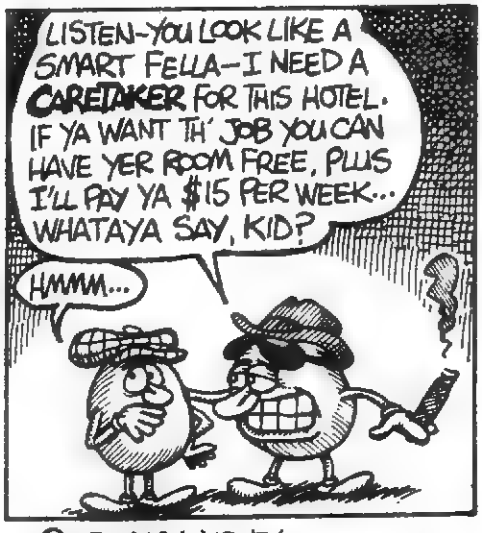
Gratis #4's only principal feature is a six page interview with Neal Adams. The interview is interesting enough, but covers familiar ground (such as the Comics Guild) and holds no surprises for those who have read interviews with Adams in other publications. Otherwise there is only a superficial two page comics review column and a two page letter column. There is occasional sloppiness in production values (the crossing out of words) and an unfortunately sophomoric editorial attitude (The Adams interview closes with the editor remarking, "Well, at least he didn't say he had to go to potty."). —P.S.

GIZMO #1

$1.25 from Tom Mason, 706 Draper Road, Blacksburg, VA 24060. 5½" x 8½", 20 pp., offset on white paper, with red card-stock cover.

Gizmo is a wonderful example of the increasing number of cartoon stripzines being published today. Editor Mason has allowed his contributors ample freedom to present their zany visions, some of which have underlying serious themes.

Gary Whitney's "Grape Jam!" is a fine piece, telling the rags-to-riches story of its lead character, a grape (!), whose easily won job and marriage (to a female grape, of course) don't work out as well as expected. The six panels per page layout fits well with the story and Whitney's straightforward cartooning style.


LISTEN-YOU LOOK LIKE A SMART FELLA-I NEED A CARETAKER FOR THIS HOTEL. IF YA WANT TH' JOB YOU CAN HAVE YER ROOM FREE, PLUS I'LL PAY YA $15 PER WEEK... WHATAYA SAY, KID?
HMMM...
©1979 GARY WHITNEY

If you're wondering what a "Gizmo" is, Brad Foster supplies the answer in "Bertram and the Gizmos," set in a "techno-crazy" future world where the wild robots call themselves "Gizmos." The first installment of this strip also introduces the *extremely* paranoid Bertram (a human), whose fear of authority finds him in the Gizmos' hideaway. Foster's cartooning varies from semi-serious to Segaresque, and his page designs are simply inspiring.

Rounding out this premiere issue is a strip by Grass Green reminiscent of an animated cartoon, and fillers by Eddie Eddings, Chad Draper, Bob Polio, Richard Howell and Mason himself. The front cover is by George Erling.

This one's highly recommended for those interested in up and coming fan cartoonists, and especially for those cartoonists out there who want to get in touch with others. —B.L.

GREAT KRYPTON! #1

$1.25 plus 25¢ postage from Kevin Gould, 7707 Meadow Road, #209, Dallas, TX 75230. 8" x 10", 26 pp., offset on white paper. Wraparound cover by George Perez on cream-colored card stock.

It was bound to happen. With the success of the *Superman* movie, somebody had to come out with a zine devoted solely to Superman and the Superman family. The nice thing about *Great Krypton*, however, is that it doesn't read like a quickly thrown together rip-off. Editor Gould and his contributors are obviously great fans of the Superman legend, and my guess is that they'd have come out

with this zine, movie or no movie.

Great Krypton is basically a good, fun and sometimes informative zine. There is a "Krypto-Quiz" (complete with answers) testing one's knowledge of Superman trivia, the first in a series of "Forgotten Classics," this time reviewing *Superman* #172, as well as a column looking back at "The Untold Tales of Superman" Mort Weisinger was so fond of using. Weisinger himself is the subject of a "tribute," which unfortunately reads more like a New York *Times* obituary than a fan appreciation of Weisinger's accomplishments as editor of the Superman family of comics.

Other articles look at the history of the ex-bottled city of Kandor, and the *real* origin of Superman (in which editor Gould overstates his love of the character by, believe it or not, drawing correlations between the Man of Steel and God!), and Carol Strickland offers an original Supergirl fiction story.

The highlight of the issue, however, is a mental exercise by Alan Turniansky in which he postulates that the Kryptonian society was an elitist one, and Superman the last of a family of oppressors. Turniansky uses evidence from various *Superman* comics to back up his theories, and does a wonderfully credible job.

Great Krypton is a throw-back to the days when fanzines were fun, and therefore (at least according to this reviewer) should be on every fan's "must read" list. — B.L.

THE ENFORCERS #3

$1.25 plus 25¢ postage from Graphics 2000, 536 South Kenmore Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90020. Editor: Gar Haywood. 8½" x 10", 48 pp., offset on newsprint, with full color covers on enamel stock.

The third issue of this alternative comic book contains "Victory," the conclusion of a three-part *Enforcers* story with plot and pencils by Larry Houston, art finishes by Sam de la Rosa and Willie Blyberg, and script by Gar Haywood; and the initial episode of *Micro-Man*, written and drawn by Houston and inked by de la Rosa and Blyberg. The Enforcers are a group of six heroes with mostly familiar super-powers (super-strength, flight, super-speed, power blasts, etc.) while Micro-Man is an alien who is five inches tall. That sounds familiar too.

In fact, familiarity is this book's problem. The art is certainly good enough if not anything special, and the plotting is competent, but we've seen it all before. Micro-Man pulls off the usual Atom/Ant-Man/Doll Man stunts decently but unsurprisingly. The Enforcers bicker among themselves, battle various monsters and encounter Kirby-esque gods, and do none of these things any better than any of their mainstream comics counterparts.

Rather, they do somewhat worse. The editor has high goals for this book, but though he promises to present credibly motivated villains, he gives us one of the hollowest around; though he promises realistic dialogue, he instead falls into banal, stilted language. He says he does not want characterization to dominate over plot, but there is no depth to the cast's personalities at all. One cannot really warm to them, and hence one cannot really care about their adventures.

The Enforcers' goal of going beyond the Marvel style to produce superhero adventures for an adult market is commendable, but one must question whether they know how to go about it, or even understand what makes the Marvel style work in the first place.

—P.S.

GRYMALKIN #3

$1.25 plus 25¢ from Mike & Gay Brewer, 3305 Linnet Road, Louisville, KY 40213. 5½" x 8½", 24 pp., offset on white paper.

Although its cover boasts interviews with Craig Russell and Jim Starlin, *Grymalkin* is for the most part a fiction zine. There are five very short stories (scenes would be more appropriate), one poem, two-page interviews with Russell and Starlin, and a lot of convention sketches by artists like Val Mayerik (cover), Marshall Rogers, Joe Staton and John Byrne/Mike Nasser (back cover).

The fiction, in general, is amateurish. One piece, however, "Requiem Passing" by Allen D. Cockrell, grabs you with its descriptive first person narrative. It is an allegorical tale told by an ancient wizard reminiscing to a young lad about his youth.

Each fiction piece has accompanying illustrations, most of which are better than the stories themselves. There is a particularly well crafted and moody illustration of the Shadow on the inside front cover.

The interviews, as noted, are short. Starlin answers questions about the similarities between Warlock and Michael Moorcock's Elric, and Craig Russell answers general questions about his influences and what kind of work he'd like to do in comics.

Grymalkin seems a little thin on content for its $1.25 price tag. —B.L.

THE COMIC WORLD #21

Published bi-monthly, $1.50 per issue or $6.00/6 issues from Robert Jennings, RFD 2, Whiting Road, Dudley, MA 01570. 8½" x 11", 40 pp., offset on white paper, with full color front cover.

Although it's been nearly twenty years since Bob Jennings published the first issue of *The Comic World*, this zine remains something both Jennings and fandom in general can be proud of. Each issue contains in-depth articles on a variety of subjects, with the major piece covering an old comics series.

The cover feature of #21 is a detailed critical appraisal of Marvel's Black Knight, tracing the character's history from the 1950s through the different incarnations of the 1960s and 1970s. One of the founding fathers of comics fandom, Jennings brings to his appraisal an invaluable perspective. He not only relates what were in the comics themselves, but offers first hand knowledge of what the atmosphere and trends of the business were.

Mark Carlson gives "Romance Comics . . .the Forgotten Genre" a once-over in a heavily illustrated ten page article. The appraisal is interesting, but as Carlson himself admits, he had never really read the romance comics until researching the article. He does however, present a very good chronology of the focus and directions the genre took over the years, even if Jennings's personal flavoring is missing.

Also included is an expose, by Jennings, of the sale of illegal comics by distributors and how this practice affects the comics publishers. This article is very well researched, coupled with historical information as well as editorial observations about what could and should have been done to combat the problem.

Rounding out the issue is Jennings's editorial reply to Joe Brancatelli's attack on *The Comic Reader*, a hilarious satire of current comics news columns, and the usual *lengthy* letter column.

The only fault one can truly find with *The Comic World* is Jennings's spelling. By his own admision it is "bad to poor." It also sometimes takes the articles a while to get moving, but this zine is so chock full of interesting reading that—even with the occassional lapse—it's always worth it.

Not only is this particular issue of *The Comic World* recommended, but at the six issue subscription price of $6.00, a full year of *The Comic World* is one of the best buys in fandom. —D.M.

Trufan Confessions

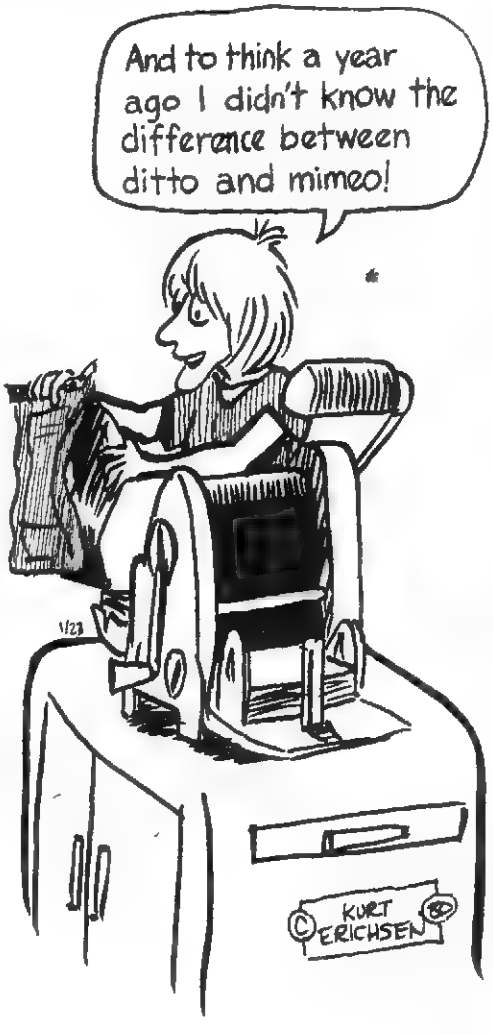
by Jay Zilber

February 1972? Roy Thomas was the new editor of the Marvel line, and was collaborating with Barry Smith on the experimental new *Conan* series. Gwen Stacy was alive and well, and if you hurried, you could still find Neal Adams's *Green Lanterns* on the newsstand for 25¢. Nonetheless, that fantastic innovation in comic art — social relevance — was dying a welcome death. In fact, the entire field of enlightened superheroics was giving way to a legion of horror-heroes, as the American comics field turned to favor the adventures of grotesque, muck-encrusted mockeries of men and supermen.

I remember February 1972 not for any of these things in particular, but for an incident which dramatically altered the course of my life. Eight years ago this month I discovered comics fandom.

Actually, it discovered me first. A year or so earlier I had begun to make a name for myself in the DC Comics letter pages. This prompted a couple of local (Columbus, Ohio) fans to pull my name out of the phone book, and, one awkward and exciting phone conversation later, I found myself invited across town to a small comics fan get-together. They were college students, five or six years my senior. At the time I didn't quite understand why they might have been interested in meeting a pesky li'l fifteen-year-old who had nothing better to do with his time than to write Letters of Comment to those not-yet-outgrown funnybooks. Even the word "fandom" was new to me, but it seemed to be something worth getting more involved in. All I knew for sure was that it made for a pleasant afternoon, talking about the latest goings-on in comics with other fans, and buying and selling a few back issues among one another. It was this turn of events on this wintry day in 1972 that first began to shape my conception of what fandom is all about.

Organized comics fandom is a comparatively recent social phenomenon. Though its roots in science fiction fandom were growing even before our parents were born, comics fandom has only been documented in its own fan press for 20 or 25 years (depending on whose account you go by). Even so, it's unsettling to think that my meager eight-year association with this hobby/way-of-life is enough, in the eyes of some, to make me a veritable old-timer. For heaven's sake, I missed out on the entire first half of fandom's rich and wonderful history! I'm hardly over the hill just because the death of Gwen Stacy is merely stale news, instead of ancient history like it is to all you young whippersnappers out there. Let's put things into perspective here.



Consider: What is fandom *really* all about?

The answer to this question, unfortunately, is only slightly less difficult to determine than the meaning of life, and they've been working on that one for thousands of years. Some poor schnooks spend their entire fannish lives worrying about why they're a part of fandom, and most throw in the towel long before their adoptive subculture makes any sense to them. At any rate, let us continue to follow the progress of Jay Zilber, neo-fan, and see what might be learned from his experience.

Buying and selling back issues: good heavens, of course this is what fandom is all about, said I. (Trading...? Oh, that's what we used to do *before* the discovery of civilized fandom.) And suddenly those LOCs to "Flash-Grams" assumed secondary importance. I began to spend the bulk of my allowance and savings recklessly. It became perfectly clear how best to get into the thick of fandom. Nothing was as important as filling the gaps in my modest collection, getting a complete run of *Captain Soforth* or *Whatever-Man*. Mere months earlier the concept of buying extra copies of a comic book would have baffled me. But now I began to accumulate duplicates or triplicates of any self-defined collectors' item issue that might later increase in market value. And when my stock grew large enough to make a go at it, I started a small-scale dealership. Any money that might be made from this naive business venture was purely incidental. I simply wanted to be an active comics fan, and from everything I'd seen so far, this was the way to go about it.

It's difficult to look back at those days and laugh, as there is nothing enormously amusing about ignorance, especially one's own. At this stage I didn't really have the *vaguest* under-

standing of fandom, save my own small corner of it. Most of us who stumbled across fandom circa 1972 were operating under the influence of the same shortsighted beliefs and misinformation about it, which the media only served to intensify and spread. Mitchell Mehdy, they informed us, paid $1801.26 for *Action Comics* #1. The second big edition of Bob Overstreet's price guide was a godsend for comics investors; for the first time the market value of comics could be documented as having risen in comparison to a previous edition. Alan Light's new adzine, *The Buyer's Guide*, literally wiped out the competition. In order to be considered a legitimate, functional member of fandom's elite, it was necessary to subscribe to his comics marketplace newszine; we were young then, and believed every word that Light printed. My first comics convention was in a glorified dealers' room in Cleveland. There were a few unmemorable panels off to the side, most of which I ignored because I was too busy spending the $30.00 I'd saved for the occasion. (Incredibly, it could take several *hours* to spend thirty bucks at a 1972 convention.) So how was anybody supposed to know that there could be something else to fandom?

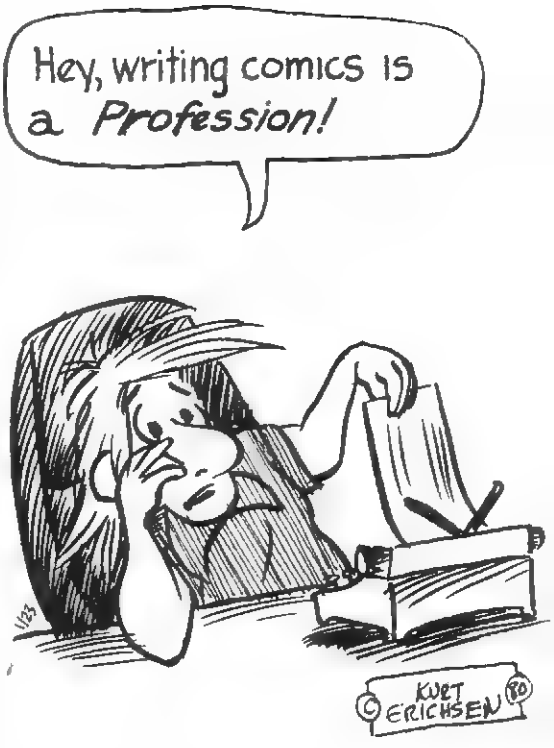
It was by sheer good luck that I ever had the opportunity to find out what else, thanks again to the fortuitous appearance of certain letters in DC magazines. Through these letter columns I learned of a certain fan club devoted to one of my favorite features, the Legion of Super-Heroes. And being familiar with my own name from the lettercols, the club's officers extended to me an invitation to write for their fanzine. Wham! Just like that, a whole new side of fandom opened up. Seeing my amateurish review column in the mimeoed pages of *The Legion Outpost* #2 was easily as great a thrill as that of seeing my LOCs in print — if not more so, since fanzine editors didn't censor my criticisms down to an exclamation of "Great!" or "Best ever!" or "It sucks the mop!" I'd discovered more than a new element of fandom — I'd found freedom of the press!

So before long, fanzine writing became my major fannish interest. And though my credits eventually extended to over a dozen major and minor fanzines, it was my relationship with the *Legion Outpost* staff that proved unique. Here I began to get an inkling of what (I then decided) fandom was *really* all about. Correspondence developed between myself and the other *Outpost* staffers and contributors. And though we'd never met face-to-face, we soon grew to consider one another part of our immediate social circles... even close friends. At length — August 1974, if you're following the time flow — the five of us *Outpost* mainstays converged on New York for an extended vacation, just to meet for the first time. We descended on the DC offices for the 10¢ tour, and we took in the New York sights and entertained and partied in typically fannish manner. To this day it stands out as one of the best times of my life, and at the time I had no further doubt that we had discovered the *true* meaning of fandom. People with common interests getting together and having fun. Surely there could be no more to it than that.

In time, I attended a few more conventions, now with the realization that cons were for meeting people and partying, not just buying and selling. I subscribed to every fanzine I could, so as to get to know as many fans as possible. And through ever-growing complex networks of correspondence I absorbed through osmosis a broader overview of this fantastic organism called fandom. As I began to form opinions about it, I decided to become distressed at fandom's preoccupation with buying, selling, and money. I understood the reasons; after all, I'd been there myself, and it was only through the good graces of fate that I'd been able to transcend to my supposedly higher plane of fannishness. Perhaps there was so much emphasis on money in mainstream fandom because most of its denizens simply hadn't had such fortunate opportunities to discover what more there was to it beyond collecting comic books. If only the masses were properly educated, all would be well with the world.

Curiously, in my self-righteous distress I managed *not* to realize one important thing. Every time I relearned what fandom was definitely all about, I proved myself wrong again in another year or so. Witness: In 1975 I published my first fanzine, an embarrassing humorzine entitled *Fandom Funnies*. Suddenly the purpose of fandom was to churn out fanzines! Everyone and his brother should publish one. The most unskilled clods were excused for the crudzines now; after all, they could hardly be held in contempt for following their totally correct instincts to publish. Immediately I made plans for a second issue, and then a third.

In 1976 I discovered Amateur Press Associations. Nirvana!!! Now I could



be in close communication with forty or fifty other fans across the country at the same time. In addition, apas afforded me the opportunity to develop and refine my writing skills, and especially to learn how to meet deadlines. I immediately joined four apas, knowing with cosmic certainty that this was the highest plane of existence fandom had to offer.

You may realize, and correctly so, that this sort of fannish activity drew us further away from the very comics field around which fandom was built. It was at this point that I began to adopt the concept of fannishness for its own sake. My present sub-clique never had to gripe about hack stories or lousy artwork or astronomical back-issue prices because we'd progressed beyond all that. Some of us didn't even read comics at all, anymore. They'd become incidental, if not irrelevant. We called ourselves "trufans," or "faans" with a double-a to intensify our prime concern. The driving force behind our fandom had become fandom itself.

And having gladly set aside comics in this manner, it seemed clear that all those unwashed masses who were unhappy with the present state of fandom, too, could easily achieve the same satisfaction if they could just unchain themselves from the notion of buying comics out of habit or mindless addiction. So certain was I that this was the One Way to the True Meaning of Fandom that I began to promote this

philosophy with almost a religious zeal. I never hesitated to entice my friends into joining an apa or two when I sensed they had the makings of a good member, for apas tend to be a minor stronghold of this sort of fandom. Though they are designed to be a forum for the discussion of comics, some apa members are often so caught up in the apa communication process that their most common topic of conversation is the state of the apa itself.

In late 1977 I took on the duties of running a small fanzine trading club known as the United Fanzine Organization. I hoped to see the UFO develop into a known entity in fandom, a reliable and highly visible source of quality fanzines. If the other members could work together toward that common goal, the UFO might one day become the backbone of the fan press, thus furthering the cause of fannish creativity. The mildly incestuous nature of this sort of fan activity — or "fanac," to use the proper jargon — never bothered me. It was all fannishly fulfilling — and though none of it dealt directly with comics, in the end it was all for fun, and it turned out to be a valuable educational experience as well. From fanzine publishing I learned about layout and design, paste-ups and mechanicals, copy-editing and proofreading, to say nothing of the business end of the publishing field. From my apa memberships I learned how to express my thoughts, and how to write clearly and concisely. And in the course of events, it was through the fan press that I also began to make acquaintances among the ranks of comic professionals....

I've occasionally put forth the theory that breaking into comics is a fantasy shared by 95% of fandom, and the other 5% are liars. Sure, what fun! Imagine making money by writing or drawing comic books! It would be the next best thing to being a fan for a living, deriving income from one's hobby, though in a far more respectable way than being a dealer. That fantasy was surely at the back of my mind when I scrawled my first LOC and throughout my fannish career. Having no other set plans when I graduated from college in 1978, I determined to make it a reality.

Well then, I promptly moved to New York, and indeed I did sell a handful of text columns and mystery stories. And from that I learned just why it is that only one fan in a thousand ever graduates to prodom. Comics writing is not the fun and games of fannish fantasy. Surprise! Comics writing is professional writing. It's hard work, doesn't pay very well if you can't work very fast, and there's no such thing as job security unless your name is Stan Lee. You need more than a competent command of the English language, you need to be able to think visually, and you must be able to come up with original ideas, or at the very least new twists on old ideas. And finally, you have to come to grips with the notion that an editor has the right, in fact the responsibility, to demand extensive rewriting if your story isn't up to par with the material he can buy from established freelancers. All in all, it's a very difficult industry to break into with or without the connections. More importantly, perhaps, it's even harder to *want* to break into comics once you've tried it.

In a way I was fortunate; industry-wide cutbacks following the "DC Implosion" made it impossible for new writers to sell much that year anyway. Forced to find a "legitimate" job while the market was closed, I had a fresh new opportunity to give fandom a thorough reevaluation, and to determine once and for all what I really wanted or expected out of it.

Again, let us consider: what is fandom really all about?

Remember, had I been asked that question eight years ago, I would have replied with the indignant certainty of a neofan: "Buying and selling comic books, of course!" I entered the ranks of fandom well after the commercial elements became firmly rooted. And like most neos I came away with the mistaken impression that fandom might as well have begun on the day I discovered it. Of course, I was grossly mistaken to have thought I'd figured it all out on Day One... but then, I've been just as grossly mistaken every other time, all throughout the entire progression. I learned nothing about the meaning of fandom, except for one little corollary. For all the strange twists and turns of fannish fate, no matter how the nature of fandom mutates or evolves, it's still true: the more things change, the more they stay the same. Neos are still neos, and we Tired Old Fans just get older.

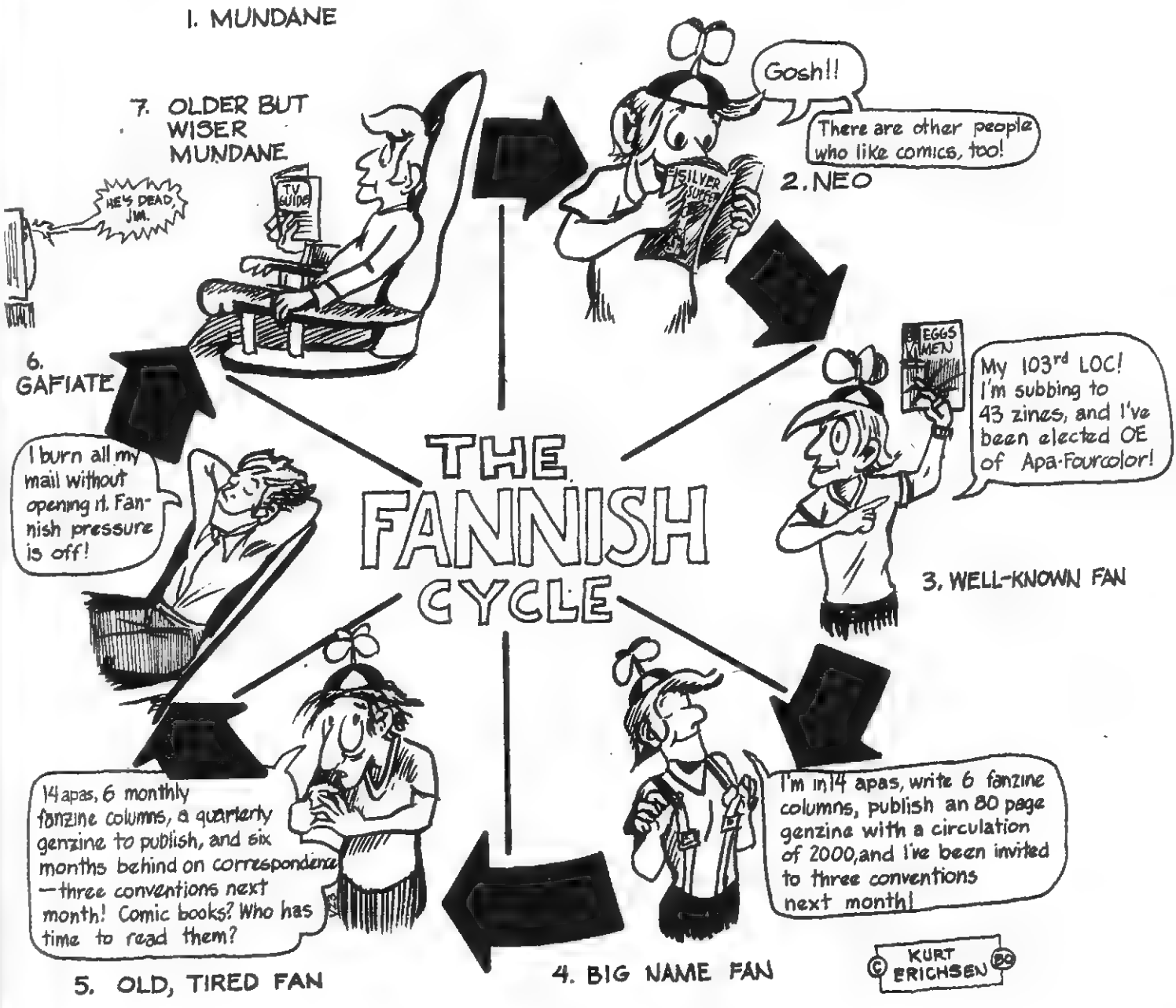
There really is a chartable progression, though. I've gone through it; so have most of my friends. Mundane becomes Neofan becomes WKF (Well-Known Fan) becomes BNF (Big-Name Fan) becomes TOF (Tired Old Fan) becomes Gafiate (from the root form "gafia," or Getting Away From It All) becomes older-but-wiser Mundane again. Certainly these are all subcultural stereotypes, and there are plenty of exceptions. Some folks become dealers, or pros, or faans, or science-fiction Neofans, or they get stalled permanently at any given level.

And here we are in 1980. Jim Shooter is editor at Marvel, and he doesn't have time to write anything at all. Roy Thomas is still hacking out the same Conan story 100 issues later, and Gwen Stacy is cloned and forgotten. Green Lantern came back, though Neal Adams and Denny O'Neil have gone off on their own searches for greener pastures. None of the comics are ever as good as they used to be, printed on plastic plates and thinner paper at twice the price. Fandom has changed a little, too. It's bigger, more sophisticated. It's seen eight more Price Guides, and back issues now cost eight times as much as they're worth. Comics conventions are too common to be special events any more. Fanzines are slicker, more professional; they make the fan press look too intimidating to get started in.

As for me, I've gotten just about everything I ever wanted, needed, or expected out of fandom. I've quit my apas and given up on the United Fanzine Organization, and in the past year I've seen more $4 movies than 40¢ comic books. Maybe it's time to move on to something else, take on some new challenges. I've set my professional sights for stakes higher than comic books, and fandom is not much help in preparing me for that.

But...no. I'm a Tired Old Fan and proud of it. Nothing has really changed that much. Every new generation is collectively certain that comics aren't as good as they used to be, and fans still go through the same progression, with the option to stop at any point along the way. I'm happy with the point I've reached, and I'll be staying there for the foreseeable future. It's a comfortable precipice from which a crusty veteran like myself can keep an eye on everything that goes on, from which I can spout these wisdoms and revelations for all to hear. At any time, I can step off into the limbo of gafiation...but not until I'm good and ready!

The best teacher has always been trial and error, and I would never dream of saying anything to diminish the importance of making mistakes to learn what not to do. But if you don't want to fall on your face as often as I did, you might want to consider some of these gems of advice I picked up along the way:


1. MUNDANE
Gosh!!
There are other people who like comics, too!
2. NEO
My 103rd LOC! I'm subbing to 43 zines, and I've been elected OE of Apa-Fourcolor!
3. WELL-KNOWN FAN
I'm in 14 apas, write 6 fanzine columns, publish an 80 page genzine with a circulation of 2000, and I've been invited to three conventions next month!
4. BIG NAME FAN
14 apas, 6 monthly fanzine columns, a quarterly genzine to publish, and six months behind on correspondence—three conventions next month! Comic books? Who has time to read them?
5. OLD, TIRED FAN
I burn all my mail without opening it. Fannish pressure is off!
6. GAFIATE
HE'S DEAD, JIM.
7. OLDER BUT WISER MUNDANE
THE FANNISH CYCLE
© KURT ERICHSEN

1) You're never right. No matter how certain you are of your rightness today, you'll only suffer that much embarrassment tomorrow when you see how wrong you are.

2) Keep an open mind. Try something new. Take advantage of *everything* fandom has to offer, or you'll never know what you might be missing.

3) Beware these two acronyms: FIAWOL and FIJAGDH. They translate to Fandom Is A Way Of Life and Fandom Is Just A God Damned Hobby, and they represent the extreme ends of the fannish spectrum. It's easy to adopt one or the other, but in order to enjoy fandom to its fullest you'll do best to strive for the middle ground. To make fandom the single most important part of life is irresponsible and dangerous, though neither is there any use in hating yourself (or anyone else) for being a fan.

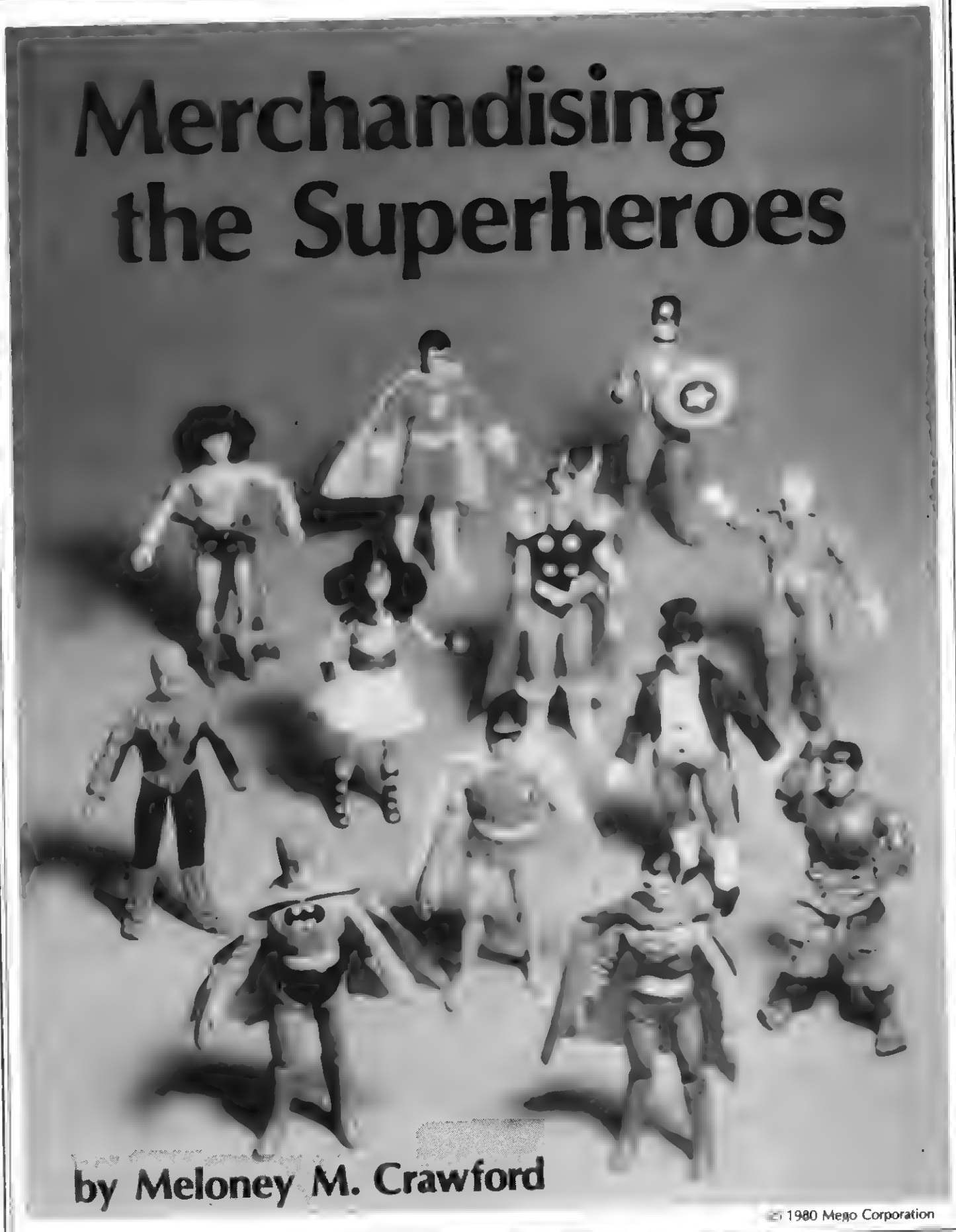
4) Fandom and comic books are all part of the real world, not separate entities. Don't pretend to give one a higher priority than the other; it's self-defeating.

5) If the value of fandom could be summed up in a single word, it would be "communication." It's there at every stage: the LOC s, the buying and selling, the fanzine contributing and publishing, the con parties and fan get-togethers. There is always communication: the exchange of ideas and opinions about mutual interests...the expression of creative instincts...broadening of the imagination, widening of horizons. Fandom may grow slick and commercial, it may lose its innocence, but the simple act of communication is the all-important link that makes fandom what it is.

What does it all mean? Maybe not a whole lot, really. In looking back over eight years of fandom and ahead to... whatever, it seems clear to me only that there is *no* one doctrine of fandom that is (or should be) universally held, no level or area of fanac that is better or worse than any other. There is no True Meaning of Fandom. It can be a means to an end, or an end in itself. You can get just about anything you want out of it...just as long as you keep things in perspective.

■

Merchandising the Superheroes



by Meloney M. Crawford

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No doubt every reader of this magazine has had some direct contact with the results of licensing and merchandising of comic book characters. Perhaps you own a t-shirt or a toy modeled after the image of your favorite superhero. Maybe you've seen *Superman: the Movie*, or watched the prime time television exploits of *The Incredible Hulk*. In addition to appearances in films, Saturday morning animated features, daily newspaper strips and on television, superheroes can be found on washcloths, sheets, kids' underwear, soap, and even on tissues and toilet paper.

While the boom in superhero licensing has been hard to ignore, the reader may have only recently considered its effects on the parent companies, Marvel and D.C. being the two leading examples. Rather than recoil from the thought of comics companies becoming involved in "big business," the reader will do well to remember that comics publishing is itself "big business," and the licensing of characters a profitable development. This attitude is made clear in the upper offices of both companies.

The figures relating percentage of profits derived from licensing as compared to those from the sales of comics are not available. However, the companies maintain that they place their emphasis on publishing. As Sol Harrison, DC's president, succinctly states, "Without editorial production, there is no licensing area." Marvel public relations director Pamela Rutt agrees, noting that while all Marvel enterprises are working profitably, publishing ventures are way up. "Any talk that the emphasis (on publishing) is going down in favor of licensing is not true."

Still, the substantial growth of character licensing at Marvel led them, as of January 1, 1980, to transfer their domestic licensing program from an agent, Columbia Pictures Merchandising, to within Cadence, joining international licensing which has always been done in-house. Comparably, DC's licensing agent is Licensing Corporation of America (LCA), a subsidiary of Warner Communications, which also owns DC.

DC's affiliation with Warners provided a licensing blitz with the onset of *Superman: the Movie*. DC licensed the character rights to Superman to a host of Warner subsidiaries, resulting in trade paperbacks, records, Atari home video games, and other items trading in on Superman's presence.

Whether the character is Superman or Spider-Man, the Hulk or Batman, the parent company has certain primary considerations when entering into a licensing situation. Perhaps the first thought is whether the proposed product is something with good value that can find a place in the commercial market. Also very important is the authenticity of the character's image as presented by the product. Often art staffers from Marvel or DC will work on the design of a product or its packaging. While the companies maintain approval of the characters' likenesses, the quality of the reproduction and the differences in mediums are taken into consideration. Sol Harrison notes that a printed towel or molded statue will, by necessity, look different than the superheroes in a two-dimensional comic book. Pamela Rutt adds that since the appearance of the product is of such high importance, Marvel production chief Sol Brodsky works closely with the licensing department to ensure the faithful transferal of a character's visage to a licensed product.

Closely related to the concern of how the product looks is the question of how the product reflects on the image or reputation of the character. While Marvel agreed to license characters for superhero toilet paper, DC refused for reasons of "good taste." While admitting that the product had provoked "mixed feelings" at Marvel, Pamela Rutt voiced her personal enthusiasm for the idea: "It's not a kid's item, but more of a fun thing."

Sometimes, licensing of characters produces surprising developments. Although Superman, Wonder Woman and Batman come to mind immediately as popular and well-known DC characters, the entire roster of *Super Friends*, including Robin and Aquaman, are among the company's most licensed characters. At Marvel, Spider-Man and the Hulk are understandably popular, but no one can explain the great popularity, for example, that Captain America enjoys in Brazil.

Pamela Rutt also relates a story involving Underoos, a brand of children's underwear designed to look like superhero costumes. "It seems that parents write in to the company to say that Underoos are the best toilet training device ever invented... they make the tots feel grown-up and special.... Now, there's an aspect we never considered when licensing the characters!"

Although characters that are licensed for merchandise are usually already successful in terms of comic sales, and licensing revenues add to company profits, there are occasions when the outcome is not so felicitous. DC's president Harrison explains, "Sometimes too much product might hurt the comic. After all, a kid only has $10.00. How is he going to spend it?"

A similar conflict took place in connection with *Superman: the Movie*. Some people wondered why DC did not take advantage of what seemed to be a captive audience and sell comics at theaters showing the film. Harrison explains that the idea was discussed, but ultimately dropped because the film production company had reserved the rights to print program books featuring the character. Therefore, DC viewed selling comics as competitive, and did not go ahead with the plan, although some theater owners sold other comics-related products. The question has been posed as to why DC did not retain the rights to sell comics at the theaters and in doing so, possibly increase the circulation of the originating product, the *Superman* comic book. Surely the deal with the film company did not hinge on that company's desire to sell program books. The question of whether or not this would have increased the sales of the *Superman* comic can be debated ad infinitum. Perhaps the sales of the comic book during the first few months of the film's release would have increased, but would that, in turn, have had a lasting effect once the film was withdrawn from its initial release? No one can truly say, although hypothetically, it would have been an interesting situation to evaluate, especially considering that the sales of comic books, although increasing recently, are not what they were even ten years ago.

Harrison states, however, that the sales of the *Superman* comic did increase, if not dramatically, after the release of the film. He views this rise as a good sign.

While not a licensing aspect *per se*, a most fascinating form of superhero merchandising takes place at Marvel where a department arranges personal appearances of Marvel characters such as Spider-Man, Captain America, Ms. Marvel, and the Hulk, at amusement parks, stores and other locations. Marvel superheroes now make at least

Meloney M. Crawford is a law student at Temple University and former public relations writer with a long time interest in comics.

two thousand personal appearances a year, originating in four U.S. cities: New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Dallas. As in-the-flesh representatives of the Marvel characters, the personal appearance and demeanor of these actors is of great importance, and there are at least four people on the staff who devote their time to screening, interviewing and auditioning potential superheroes.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to see the limits of superhero merchandising. Marvel has recently introduced both the Dazzler and Rom, two characters who were originally conceived to tie in with merchandising. The Dazzler, first envisioned as the Disco Dazzler, was to have been a tie in with Casablanca Records, the company that manufactured Kiss. While Marvel would produce the comic book exploits of the character, Casablanca would hold auditions for a live Dazzler to record albums and make concert appearances. Casablanca has reportedly pulled out of the deal, yet Marvel's Dazzler has already appeared in issues of *X-Men*, *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Fantastic Four*. Rom, as both a toy and a comic book, appears to be doing extremely well.

DC has initiated a program which provides incentives for artists and writers who create "new concepts or characters" by giving the creator a fixed percentage of any subsequent licensing. DC feels that giving the writers and artists a piece of the action in ancillary rights is an equitable solution to the ongoing conflicts between creator and publisher.

The case of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, the creators of Superman, who sued DC for what they considered an equitable share of the money DC has made from the character over the years, can be seen as a direct precedent to DC's relatively new policy. Siegel and Shuster, incidentally, lost their case when it came before the Supreme Court, but were granted a later settlement from DC, acting independently.

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The New York based comic companies' relationship with the Hollywood based film and television industry has dramatically increased in the late 1970s. The film and television adaptations of popular comics characters are easily the most visible and accessible form of merchandising. The history of film adaptations of comic characters goes back to the 1940s and the *Superman* and *Batman* serials, and the Fleischer *Superman* cartoons. The 1950s brought the *Superman* television show, and the 1960s the live-action *Batman* series, while Spider-Man, Fantastic Four and other Marvel superheroes came to television in animated features. These adaptations, however, were the exception, and not the norm.

Today, Hollywood appears so infatuated with comics characters that series such as *Dial 'H' for Hero* and *The Inferior Five*, which have not been printed as comic books in at least ten years, are being developed as animated cartoons for possible airing on Saturday mornings in the Fall 1980 television schedule. The ABC network has optioned several Marvel characters and development is being done on Daredevil, Thor, Teen Hulk, and the format of *Crazy* magazine (sic). *Spider-Woman*, of course, is already on the air, as is DC's *Plastic Man* and *Super Friends*. Unfortunately for comic book fans, *The Avengers* and the original *X-Men* were dropped from consideration after an initial interest was expressed for those series.

Both Marvel and DC retain approval of the faithful transposition of the characters' likenesses to the screen. As with other merchandized products, the art staffs at both companies supply supplemental model sheets and character designs for the studios.

However, the comic companies do not necessarily have approval and control over the scripts and storylines. In one specific example, the *Thor* presentation, the animation studio handling the character, Ruby-Spears Productions, closely followed the first fifteen to twenty issues of the *Thor* comic book and not the current storylines. Stan Lee reportedly wanted the proposed series set in Asgard, yet the studio's scenario calls for the action to take place both in Asgard and on Earth, using Don Blake, Jane Foster and the general 'look' of the comic book in the early 1960s. The network, at last report, has not ordered a change in Ruby-Spears' plans. Copies of the scripts for the Marvel adaptations, however, are sent to Stan Lee and John Romita.

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Comics characters, in general, have been translated to the screen with varying degrees of faithfulness. The *Batman* television show of the 1960s is an outright case of blatant infidelity. The *Doctor Strange* television film, while not overly faithful, presented a somewhat viable alternative, as does *The Incredible Hulk* series. The Saturday morning animated adventures of the Thing, however, stand as an unfortunately classic example of how the translation of a comic character to television can be both different and ridiculous. In the animated series, the Thing is a teenager who when he wants to turn into the Thing, screams, "Thing-rings do your thing!" At that point, orange rocks suddenly converge on his body.

Superman: the Movie, however, is considered a commendable effort. Sol Harrison, summing up the question of editorial control over the adaptations, says that DC gives the studio control "as long as it doesn't hurt the character."

In the meantime, you can not only read about your favorite comics characters, but see them on television, in the movies, and accent your life with superhero merchandise as well. ■

Gene Colan: A Profile

Thirty-five years as a master storyteller

by Dean Mullaney

Comics are, by all accounts, a storytelling medium. While the relative merits of various artistic styles have been argued over the years, it is generally agreed, especially by those who make their living in the comics field, that the success of a comic more often than not depends on the storytelling abilities of the artist.

Storytelling, while it is a complex process, is in its most basic definition, the breaking down of a story into a progression of panels which, taken together, relay that story both effectively and interestingly. Comics are unique in storytelling in that two succeeding panels may in one instance occur a split second apart, and in other instances, occur years and even galaxies apart. The ability of the artist to know when and where to break the action, when to slow it down, when to speed it along, what to accent in a particular panel, when and how to establish a scene, when to move in for a close-up, how to crop the panels for the optimum effect, what angles are most effective for particular results all contribute to his ability to manipulate the reader's eye to see exactly what he wants to them to.

It seems odd, therefore, that in comics there are very few artists who are considered master storytellers. Detailed rendering or realistic figure drawing are both interesting sidelights to drawing comic books—and they are no more than that, but the storytelling remains the single major factor in a comics story's success. Will Eisner is a master storyteller. So are Hal Foster, Milton Caniff and Chester Gould. In comic books, there are Jack Kirby, Joe Kubert, Steve Ditko and John Buscema. Among the younger artists, Berni Wrightson tells a mean story, as does

MEANWHILE, UNAWARE THAT THE EVIL ROMAN IS FOLLOWING HIS EVERY MOVE, NAMOR SILENTLY ENTERS THE FORBIDDING CAVE...
SOMEWHERE AHEAD IS THE FIRST CLUE TO THE LOCATION OF NEPTUNE'S TRIDENT!
NO MATTER WHAT AWAITS ME, I MUST NOT FALTER--I DARE NOT FALTER!
FOR, EVEN MORE THAN MY OWN LIFE IS AT STAKE...!
IF ATLANTIS IS NOT DETHRONED, IT COULD MEAN TOTAL WAR!!
A WAR WHICH MIGHT WIPE OUT BOTH ATLANTIS--AND THE HUMAN RACE!
© 1980 Marvel Comics Group

Tales to Astonish #70, August 1965: Colan's first work for Marvel upon returning in the 1960s.

THEN I REMEMBERED LATER ON THAT HE HADN'T TOLD ME WHICH OF THE THREE CELLS THE MAP WAS HIDDEN IN! SO I FIGURED OUT A SCHEME TO FIND
—THREE OF US WOULD "GIVE UP" BE PLACED IN SEPARATE CELLS—AND BE SURE OF FINDING THE MAP—WHICH WE DID! BUT FIRST WE WORKED OUT THE PLAN TO ESCAPE WHILE BEING TRANSFERRED!

Hopalong Cassidy #104, August 1955: Colan's use of the matched shot, a 180° cut.

© 1980 DC Comics, Inc.

Navy Combat #18, June 1958: Colan's use of angles and perspective to accent action

© 1980 Marvel Comics Group

THEY SCRAMBLED DOWN THE NETS AND INTO THE SMALL BOATS!
MARINE FIRE RAKED THE DECKS OF THE GROUNDED SHIP
SERGEANT KEEP THOSE OTHER BOATS OUT A BIT TO RAKE THE DECKS AND GIVE COVER TO THE FIRST WAVE UP. THEN COME IN!
RIGHT, MAJOR! KEEP THOSE GUNS HOT MEN
THE FIRST WAVE OF MARINES REACHED THE DECK!
DEPLOY! TAKE THEM MEN!
THE SECOND WAVE SWEPT UP AND OVER AND ONTO THE COMMIE SHIP'S DECK!
LIKE FURIES THE MARINES ATTACKED CARRYING EVERYTHING BEFORE THEM!
THE DESTROYER TAKEN THE MARINES TURNED HER GUNS ON THE OTHER RED SHIP!
SERGEANT MAN THE SHIP'S GUNS
LOADER GET IN THERE! C'MON GET THE LEAD OUT! POINTER? READY!
FIRE!

Marshall Rogers. What all these artists have in common is that they are designers of the comics page, and not simply illustrators. Some, like Foster, combine this with an incredible eye for detail; others, like Kirby, depict the essence of their subjects through expressionistic means.

For the past thirty-five years, Gene Colan has been a master comics storyteller. In a field in which the popular artistic styles have changed as much as they have in comics, the consistency of Colan's work is astounding. A simple comparison of the comic book pages reproduced throughout this article, which span twenty-four years, clearly displays this. Gene Colan learned his craft early and refined it to the point where now, breaking down and pacing a story has become near instinctual.

As a youngster, Colan read many comics and hoped, as do many comics readers of today, one day to break into the business. In the early 1940s he did his own comics at home. "I would create my own little characters for my own enjoyment," Colan reminisces. "One of them was 'Jim Turner—American Spy'—this was at the time when the U.S. was first getting into the war with Germany. I would sit down for hours and go through a whole sketch pad, ruling out the panels and putting the character through all different situations. Not knowing, however, that eventually I would make comics my career."

From his earliest attempts, Colan would draw for continuity. He says that he never approached a comics company with a sample that consisted simply of single illustrations; he always had a complete story in hand to show how he could tell a story. "One thing I tell younger artists when I see them at conventions," Colan says, "is to learn storytelling. One beautiful picture isn't enough."

Colan began his professional comics career at Fiction House, where he did pencils and inks for a summer before going into the army. Upon being discharged from the army, he went to National/DC looking for work. "I was told they couldn't use me at the time," he recalls, smiling. "Perhaps they felt I was too green. They suggested I go to art school for some more training."

Gene Colan enrolled in the Art Students' League of New York for a few years. While studying there he brought some story breakdown samples to Stan Lee at Timely/Marvel. Colan remembers the early days at Timely with

fondness: "I began working on staff around 1946. At the time, the offices were in the second floor of the Empire State Building and there was a bullpen of artists working. John Buscema came in about a year after I did."

Syd Shores who ran the art staff at Timely during that period, trained the artists in the day-to-day business of breaking down a story.

Over the years, Colan has worked for virtually every major comics publisher, freelancing for National, St. John, Warren, Quality (where he pencilled and inked *Blackhawk* for a time), EC, and Charlton. The EC assignment Colan got from war books editor Harvey Kurtzman, whom Colan labels "a perfectionist," was one that he actively sought out. Like most comics artists in the 1950s, Colan very much wanted to be associated with that illustrious comics company.

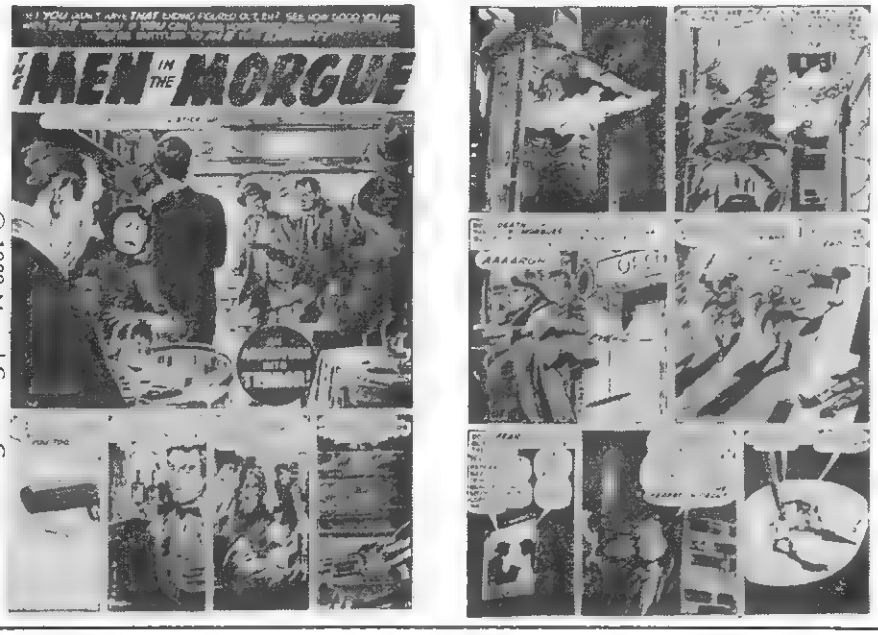
The titles for which Colan has illustrated also cover the gamut of genres in the field: superhero, mystery, horror, war, romance, western and supernatural. Film and television adaptations have likewise not escaped Colan's touch, from *Hopalong Cassidy* and *Maverick* to *Jaws II* and *Meteor*.

A big movie fan, Colan's fascination with film transposes itself in his approach to comics. When asked about how he approaches the breakdown of a written script, Colan replies: "I always think of film...If I were watching a film, how might they approach this story, break it down into specific scenes and shots?...I'm interested in seeing how the picture is framed, how it is broken down in the storyline." Marv Wolfman, who wrote *Tomb of Dracula* for eight years with Colan as artist, agrees. "He uses very different angles and perspectives. There was one scene in which Gene drew a car, arced off the ground as if it were not made of metal. He bent the car toward the speed lines, but it looked incredibly realistic."

The excerpt from the *Hopalong Cassidy* page (1955) reprinted here further illustrates Colan's use of angles and perspectives. Colan 'shoots' from a low angle, up at the thieves in the first panel, and shows the same scene from the opposite angle shooting down in the succeeding panel—a complete and complementary 180° cut

An evaluation of the full page reprinted from *Navy Combat* (1958) reveals a classic example of how varying angles and perspectives can make a scene work to its optimum effect. The first panel shoots down at a marine scurrying into a small boat, and could easily have been shown from a long shot. Yet Colan uses a high angle, showing other marines already crowded into the boat, advancing the storyline and speeding up the action. The third panel also uses a high angle, although not as severe as in the first panel. This time, however, the angle shows us that the marines have not as yet reached the deck of the enemy ship. The fourth and sixth panels, in contrast, are low angles. The fourth panel (in addition to giving a strong close-up of the marine in the foreground), in showing the leaping ma-

Adventures into Terror #28, February 1954: Establishing a scene, reaction and action.



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IT'S ALL RIGHT, NATASHA. YOU'D BETTER GO TO HIM, NOW.
HE NEEDS YOU.
THERE'S NOTHING MORE I CAN GIVE HIM.
ABOVE THEM, A DOOR OPENS, AND FOOTSTEPS MOVE DOWN SLICK STONE STAIRS...
A TALL MAN HOLDS OUT A WELCOMING HAND AND IT'S TAKEN, AND FOR A MOMENT, TWO PEOPLE SMILE...
HE'S YOURS NOW, NATASHA.
TREAT HIM KINDLY. SOMETIMES HE CAN BE A FOOL.
BUT THERE'S NOTHING NEW IN THAT, IS THERE...? WHEN IT COMES TO LOVE, AREN'T WE ALL JUST A LITTLE BIT FOOLISH?
"...AREN'T WE ALL... JUST A LITTLE BIT BLIND?"
SAN FRANCISCO

Daredevil #86, April 1972: Colan and Palmer's use of shading and realistic detail.

© 1980 Marvel Comics Group

rine from a low angle, accents his momentum. Colan crops the sixth panel and draws the crouching marine from another low angle, having him fill the panel and thereby exert a commanding presence. There are many other excellent examples of storytelling and composition on this page, such as the use of foreground and background in panel seven, but we will allow the reader to discover them at their leisure.

Economy of space is also a very important element in panel design. Through compositional values and the correct use of angles, an artist can depict more than one 'message' to the reader. Referring again to the *Navy Combat* page, we may note that in the second panel, Colan conveys a number of 'messages': the tilted angle and diagonal lines dramatize that the enemy ship is under siege; the marine boat in the background shows us exactly how far away the attackers are, and the foreground gives the most direct example of the action, with the seaman falling under the hail of bullets.

The pages reprinted from *Adventures into Terror* (1954) are other fine examples of Colan's storytelling magic. The first panel establishes the scene. Panel two accents the antagonist's threat. Panels three and four present the bartender's reaction, with the fourth panel utilizing a mirror to add depth as well as a focus on the faces of both the bartender and antagonist. The final panel on page one shows simply the bartender's gun. The simplicity of the panel allows the reader to move quickly through it, and get to the action following the bartender's reaction. Page two starts off with a quick two-shot of both men shooting at each other. Both these pages, and the page from *Navy Combat*, can easily be 'read' without words. The storytelling is that good.

The inking in these pages is Colan's. "Something has got to be lost when someone else interprets your work. If you ink your own pencils, the total job is yours. It reflects exactly what you envision it to be," is the way Colan puts it. Although he still prefers to ink his own pencils, Gene Colan has only inked four stories in the past fifteen years. Unfortunately, the time factor and his contractual obligation to Marvel to turn out a certain number of pages per month pretty much prevents Colan from doing both pencils and inks these days.

Asked to name the inker, other than himself, he prefers most over his pencils, Colan quickly mentions Tom Palmer, and continues that he also likes the work Dan Green has been doing recently on *Doctor Strange*. The collaboration between Colan and Palmer began in 1968 in *Doctor Strange* #172. Since that time, Tom Palmer has inked close to *two thousand* pages of Gene Colan's pencils. The *Daredevil* page excerpt reprinted here (1972) is a fine example of the complementary nature of the two artists' collaboration. Notice how each artist excels in depicting the folds in everyday clothing. The shading is both soft and realistic.

Gene Colan's use of close-ups and the descriptive facial expressions of his characters are almost unique in comics. The close-up is a very powerful shot, whether in comics or film,

Doctor Strange #10, October 1975: A gradual pulling back and reverse cut.

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I CAN'T ANSWER FOR YOU, MY DEAR. I WISH I COULD, BUT --
PLEASE, RACHEL -- LISTEN TO WHAT I SAY. I SAID LOVE -- NOT RESPECT -- NOT PITY -- NOTHING ELSE -- LOVE!
WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU FELT LOVED?

Tomb of Dracula #64, May 1978: Colan's use of the close-up, and his realistic, expression-filled faces.

and as such, should not be used either too much or too little. A close-up is generally used to convey extreme emotional reaction. Since comics are generally thought of as an action medium, most comic book artists rarely use the close-up, and when they do, it is often misused. The majority of comic book artists only have one or two stock faces in their artistic repertoire. It is therefore impossible for those artists to convey a deep emotional reaction with square jaws, open mouths and wide eyes. The *Tomb of Dracula* page (1978) reprinted (also inked by Palmer) uses a number of close-ups—more than are usually called for—but the emotion and tension of the scene is anything but usual. Rachel van Helsing, who has spent most of her life hunting Dracula, is confronted with the fact that she has devoted her life to hatred and has never felt love. Colan uses the close-ups to intensify the situation and to play off the reactions of her fellows.

Marv Wolfman, who wrote that scene, comments: "Gene draws the most realistic, emotion-filled faces of comic book artists. He has such a photographic style and can do very subtle emotions. You take advantage of this. Knowing Gene's capabilities, I was allowed to do very subtle emotions. You can't ask many artist to draw whimsy, for example, or to draw a character quivering, right before they cry. With most other artists I would write a caption describing the character quivering. Gene would show it in the artwork...He's an excellent artist for bringing more realistic persons to the comic book page."

The *Tomb of Dracula* series will shortly surpass *Daredevil* as the one strip Gene Colan has drawn for the longest period of time. He was the only artist on the color *Tomb of Dracula* series during its seventy issue run, and remains the primary penciller in the black-and-white series. *Daredevil* and many of Marvel's other superhero titles, however, were Colan's mainstay prior to his beginning the *Dracula* series.

Although he himself claims that he prefers single, complete (and preferably eerie) stories to the superhero genre, many comic book fans consider Gene Colan "the" artist for *Daredevil*, "the" artist for *Iron Man*, and "the" artist for *Sub-Mariner*. His interpretation of *Doctor Strange* and *Howard the Duck* have also been lauded by critics of comic book art.

The *Daredevil* series is one of the superhero comics which does not rely on weapons and gimmickry. The accent, rather, is on swashbuckling adventure. The title character is indeed a daredevil, and throughout Colan's eighty or so issues as the strip's penciller, Daredevil was seen gracefully swinging over car tops, escaping from the clutches of villains more powerful than himself, and using his radar sense and acrobatic skills to perform feats of physical magic. Colan portrayed the quintessential Daredevil: a great physical specimen whose gymnastic agility allowed him to outfight his opponents believably. Colan depicted Daredevil as a picture of grace in the midst of these fight scenes.

© 1980 Marvel Comics Group

BUT NOW--I AM FAR MORE POWERFUL THAN EVER!!
IT IS YOU!! YOU STILL LIVE!!
AIDED BY THE WIZARDRY OF THE MAN CALLED HALF-FACE, I AM THE MASTER OF A DOZEN SUCH AS YOU!
HE ALMOST DEFEATED ME LAST TIME WE FOUGHT!!--AND NOW--IF HIS POWER HAS BEEN INCREASED--
I'M IN FOR THE BATTLE OF MY LIFE!!
WE THINK IT HAPPENED IN #83--OR IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN #82--BUT ONE THING WE'RE SURE OF--IT

Tales of Suspense *#93, September 1967: Colan portrays sheer power.*

Conversely, Iron Man under Colan's treatment, is a picture of power. The *Iron Man* series has highlighed the scientific weaponry developed by Tony Stark for his Iron Man armor. Colan handled both Iron Man and Daredevil equally well, and differently.

It is often said that the best artist is the thinking artist. Gene Colan can easily be referred to as a thinking artist. He consciously interprets each character and story as individual entities. As he himself says, "I always approach a story for my own benefit, the way I want it to look...When I get a story, I interpret it the best way I can." ■

CAPTAIN CANUCK™

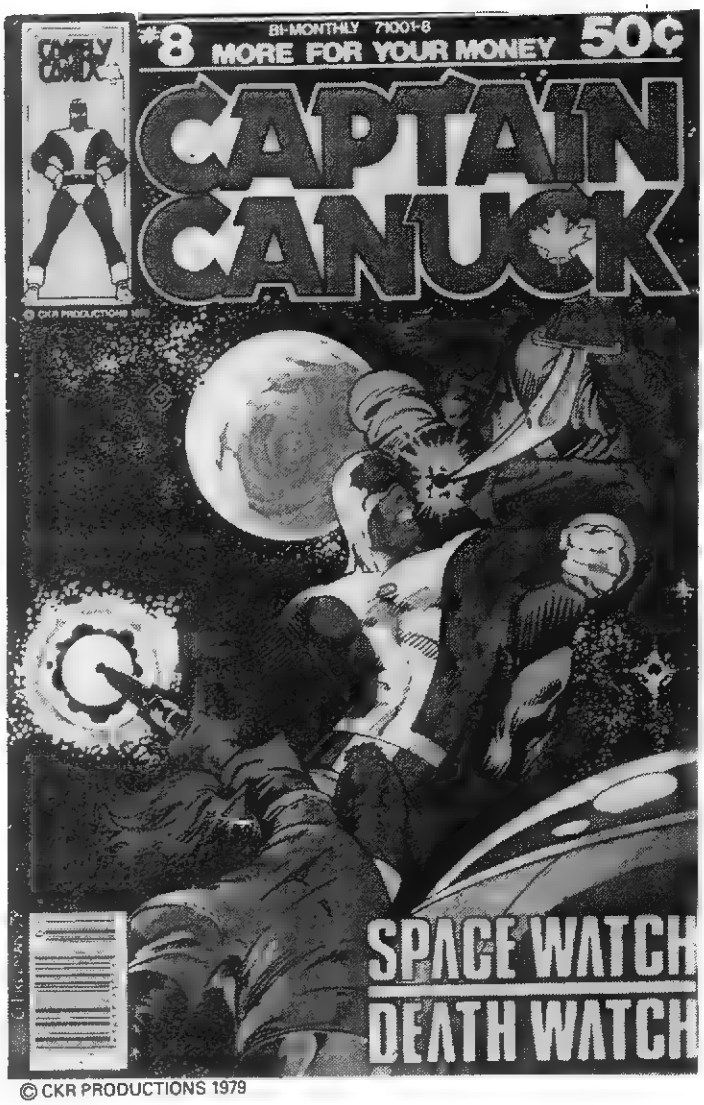
by Hal Schuster

The virtues of *Captain Canuck* comics may not be obvious at first glance. Captain Canuck is not a very original name. It conjures visions of Captain America and Captain Britain. It's a little more original than Captain Canada, but not much. Captain Canuck also conjures visions of dangerous treks across ice-encrusted plains and treacherous mountain intrigues.

Nor is his origin atypical. Tom Evans, a native Canadian and a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, meets a group of aliens while leading a boy scout troop, and in typical comic book fashion they zap him with rays endowing him with greater strength and speed than a normal man's. The heads of C.I.S.O. (Canadian International Security Organization), a group created in the 1980s to combat terrorism, take notice and turn him into the living symbol of Canada. And Captain Canuck is born.

These are a fairly typical name and origin for a superhero. But Captain Canuck is meant to fit the traditional mold, to fill a niche in fact, by providing Canada with its own hero. The basic underlying difference between this and every other comics title in the rack is that he's a Canadian and not U.S.-based. At times the chauvinism shows such as when we learn that at the time of the adventures, 1994, Canada has become "the most important country in the world" or that "he's a true blue Canadian, and only resorts to violence when there is no other alternative." Perhaps Americans are equally chauvinistic with their heroes representing "truth, justice and the American way," but they tend not to notice.

The Captain is different in other ways as well. He represents a refreshing return to traditional values. He is not a complicated fellow; Captain Canuck is the strong, silent type, god fearing and patriotic. Even in this age of introspection and self-doubt, there



© CKR PRODUCTIONS 1979

is still a longing for the simpler values, a need for a hero who can take on the bad guys and make us feel safe, a hero who doesn't question our ideals but supports them. This factor greatly adds to the appeal of the Captain.

To provide a little background on Captain Canuck and since the earlier issues are somewhat hard to come by, a brief recap of his initial adventures is in order. The first issue is the weakest, with very poor artwork mixed with excellent photo insertions a la the early 1960s Jack Kirby. The book has some of the oddest printing and variations in paper stock to be found. The story introduces the Captain and Bluefox, who turns out to be a sleeper agent planted by communist terrorists. Captain Canuck foils a planned invasion of Canada and prevents a plan for nuclear blackmail from succeeding. The second issue marked artistic improvement and a stabilization in paper stock. Captain Canuck's special Royal Canadian Mounted Police squad is formed and the Captain begins working for both C.I.S.O. and the R.C.M.P. He invades a foreign country to locate the source of the terrorists' nuclear missles and defeats the mad scientist involved. In issue three Captain Canuck fares quite poorly. The first part of the story shows him hospitalized by an explosion and the second part portrays his abduction from the hospital by some very unfriendly people. The final scene shows the Captain in a semiconscious state being driven off to a perilous end. It was at this point that the adventures of Captain Canuck concluded for four years. It was quite frustrating to anyone following the series, but that is one of the hazards of fan publishing and perhaps the strongest demonstration of why it is highly risky to do a continuing story in an amatuer publication.

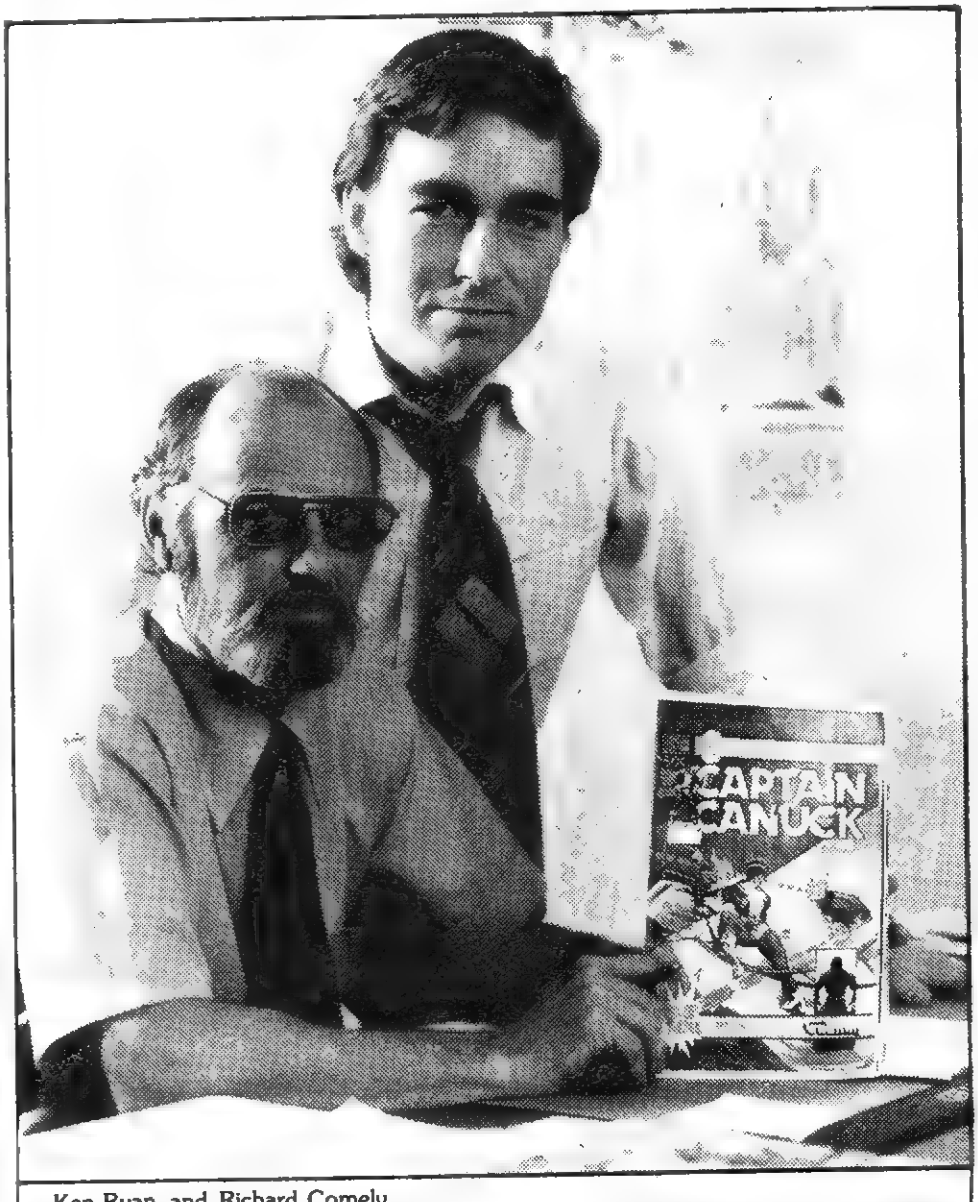
Jonn, the major supporting feature throughout the book's history, appeared in issues one through three in the earlier incarnation of the book, was then revived with issue seven and concluded in the current issue. As with Captain Canuck himself, the creative team of Richard Comely and George Freeman have shared the art duties, with Comely supplying the writing. Captain John Edwards of the star-spanning Zivok crash lands on a strange planet, Trollis, and immediately finds himself in a sword and sorcery environment confronted by an evil wizard. After escaping the wizard, fighting various barbarians and involving himself in a war of wizards, he rescues his friends and defeats the bad guys. The adventures have a strong Edgar Rice Burroughs flavor. Finally returning to his star-spanning people at the conclusion of the series, he brings with him a gift from his friends, a magic sword. Further adventures in the super-scientific civilization Jonn returns to may be presented in future issues. The writing in this series is fairly typical, but also surprisingly strong for the small amount of space devoted to it (most installments averaged seven pages and one as short as three). Despite uneven artwork, some issues excellent and others awful, the series still managed to gain a following among the book's readers and four years ago was considered for a possible second book of its own.

Perhaps the best series to run in *Captain Canuck*, including the Captain himself, is that of Jason Corey, The Catman. Appearing in issues four and six the strip is obviously influenced by Batman and the Shadow, and the tone is that of the dark urban world of crime. But it follows that tradition well. Jason Corey is caught in a landslide while speluncking and left for dead. He is saved by an alien scientist, the last survivor of a star crash who keeps sasquatches for pets. The scientist nurses Corey back to health and treats him with a series of exposures to radiation. Made as comfortable as possible, Corey still feels he is a prisoner as the scientist, fearing exposure of his identity, will not let him return to the world. The scientist possesses a strange device making Corey stronger than normal and immune to cold which Corey steals. He returns to civilization but does not reveal the identity of the scientist. The entire origin sequence is told in retrospect as an explanation to his sister for his bizarre appearance. The visual presentation of his origin is excellent and we don't really know to whom he is talking until the next to last panel in the book. The second installment is

even stronger. Corey begins his quest to clear his father's name and begins to battle the urban underworld. The difference in feel from the first story's open airy mountain spaces is dramatic. It is an odd combination of an illustrated novel and a comic story such as the one presented in the *Batman* dollar spectacular. The attempts at odd camera angles and panel compositions that don't quite work in the *Jonn* or *Captain Canuck* strips somehow work for the Catman. It will be interesting to se how *The Catman* develops and how he clears his father.

Richard Comely, together with Ron Leishman, came up with the idea of producing a Canadian comic book with a Canadian superhero in 1972 when Leishman designed the costume. The publication, under the banner of Comely Comics, was launched in 1975 and was virtually a one-man show with Comely writing, drawing, editing and publishing *Captain Canuck*. Some contributions were made by other creators but these were minimal and not usually on the lead feature. The printing and coloring process were unique and attractive. Perhaps they were too unique for U.S. consumption as newsstand and collector shop sales were at best mediocre. Although the book was reported to have done well in Canada, it collapsed due to inadequate financing, high production costs and probably poor management. The book was cancelled with issue three, part of the way into a story.

The story was concluded last year in the fourth issue. The book returned under the general management of Ken Ryan, an entrepeneur with experience in various fields of commerce. This time, under the banner of CKR Productions, it had the backing it needed in Canada and began printing at World Color Press, the printer for virtually all comic books and a good fifty percent of all magazines in the U.S. The publication has remained on schedule since and issue number eight has just been released.



Ken Ryan and Richard Comely

Richard Comely is still involved with responsibility in the area he knows best as editor-in-chief. George Freeman, a commercial art graduate of Red River Community College, is now the artist for Captain Canuck. With the replacement of Comely by Freeman the art improved dramatically. Both the cover appearance and the interior art now show a much greater sophistication. The art is now the book's long suit; serious work is still needed in the writing department. Comely is a good plotter but an often stilted scripter. Perhaps combined with a scripter, this would be improved. Jean-Claude St. Aubin, a Calgary-based commercial artist, has become the company's inker and colorist. With the increase in staff and the sales success, the company is planning a second title possibly featuring the Catman.

The magazine is one of the best buys in comics pricewise. At fifty cents for twenty-five pages it is a far better buy than most comics at forty cents for only seventeen pages.

One sidelight of interest is the degree to which the company has copied their U.S. competitors. One area this strongly shows up in is in merchandising, with everything from Captain Canuck pens to Captain Canuck shirts. But with the economics of comics publishing perhaps we should be grateful for these items as they often provide a publisher with the margin of profit necessary for continuing.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of *Captain Canuck* is the sales success it has achieved. With most comics printing two to three times what they actually sell, *Captain Canuck*'s average newsstand sale of 75% is incredible. The book, according to the publisher, is the best selling comic in Canada. Sol Harrison, publisher of DC Comics, reports that DC also does 10% better newsstand sale in Canada. In the U.S., *Captain Canuck* is only sold through comics specialty stores.

With the dearth of comics publishers, and the worn-out look of most of the Marvel and DC characters, it is refreshing to have another comics line to read. Hopefully Captain Canuck and his friends will continue to improve their title and will add another publishing force to the picture. We can only wait and see. ■

Animation/ Carl Macek

California Dreamin'

By this time probably every comics fan is aware of the growing invasion of Hollywood by numerous comic book artists and writers. It is an observation that has been recorded in various published reports from a variety of sources. This invasion, on the surface, might seem to be the logical extension of a number of careers which got their start in the comics field. It might also suggest a new wave of fresh ideas and a unique approach to a well established entertainment field. What these reports don't suggest is the rate of success these talents are experiencing as well as the inherent difficulties of being "wide-eyed in Babylon."

Comic artists in Hollywood is not a new concept. Masters of the form such as Alex Toth, Gray Morrow and Doug Wildey have been making serious contributions to the animation and motion picture field for years. Morrow did the storyboards for the animated *Spider-Man* series in the 1960s. Wildey masterminded the excellent *Johnny Quest* series, while Toth has been involved with animation from *The Space Angel* and *Clutch Cargo* through such classic Hanna-Barbera characters like *Space Ghost* and *Shazam*, to name just a few. Recently, Wildey supervised the *Godzilla* Saturday morning show. Toth worked outside of the animation field designing effective storyboards for the underground classic *Hickey and Boggs* starring Robert Culp and Bill Cosby.

What *is* a new concept is the large presence of comic book personnel who have turned to Hollywood. Veteran comics artist Jack Kirby stopped drawing comic books and started working in animation this late in his career. Stan Lee is almost constantly seen rubbing elbows with the Hollywood elite in the hope of landing another deal which would bring another Marvel character to life on film. And then there are Mike Ploog, Russ Heath, Scott Shaw, and Mike Sekowsky, among others who have embraced the field of animation and film with full steam. This list does not stop with artists. Talents such as Mark Evanier, Steve Gerber, Roy Thomas, Don Glut, Gerry Conway and Marty Pasko, to name a few, are breaking through the barriers which exist around the more active production houses in tinseltown. Even Barry Smith has been seen in North Hollywood recently. When asked what brought him to the West Coast, Smith reportedly mentioned a movie that he was considering working on.

There is an obvious difference in the basic structures of the film industry and the comics industry. Much more money is spent in the film industry on developing new projects and concepts that may often never see the light of day. It is almost unheard of in the comics industry for money to be spent on development of new projects. Filmmaking is an industry that keys into specific cultural extremes. It does not have the immediacy of other forms of mass-produced popular entertainment. Therefore it is not difficult to understand that, for comic book writers, making a dent in Hollywood's famed industry is not always an easy transition, if the transition can be made at all.

Writing for film is not the same as writing for comics. There are several similarities, and yet the very nature of writing comics "the Marvel way," for example, with conferences prior to the art and the actual dialogue added after the pencils have been completed, is anathema to filmmaking. The ritual of comics writing is rather unstandardized whereas script writing conforms to a rigid set of rules. In an industry that is crying for stories and interesting, innovative writing, many of the comic book writers have difficulty hitting on the right combination for a producible screenplay. Stan Lee, for example, is reportedly not finding the road an easy one for his script on the proposed multi-million dollar *Silver Surfer* movie.

At last word, this is what the following people are up to:

Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway are reportedly working on several original story ideas for possible development as film projects.

Marty Pasko sold a *Buck Rogers* teleplay which aired in January, and is doing development work for the animation studio, Ruby-Spears.

Mark Evanier, who at one time was the story editor on *Welcome Back, Kotter*, is incredibly busy. In addition to writing pilot scripts of the *Teen Hulk* and *The Inferior Five* for Ruby-Spears, he is the head writer for a new variety show featuring the Japanese bubblegum rock group, Pink Lady.

Steve Gerber is writing and doing story editing for Ruby-Spears, and is developing new shows for the Fall 1980 season. Gerber and Evanier also remain co-editors of Hanna Barbera's foreign comic books.

Clair Noto has just completed a science fiction script for Universal Studios. Prior to that, she completed a screenplay for an action/adventure film for Raystar.

Comic book artists have also been active in the film and animation studios.

Some of the more solid and creative positions which showcase comic talents in Hollywood occur when the subject matter cries for a graphic narrative approach. William Stout, whose work has appeared in many underground comics and more recently in *Heavy Metal*, began working on John Milius' production of *Conan*. Stout was initially hired to transform Milius' script into a unique illustrated type of storyboard, and produced a magnificent graphic narrative breakdown which carried the plot through the initial confrontation which leaves a young Conan in slavery and forms the basis of his characterization. Working side by side with Ron Cobb, Stout is also assisting in the production design, illustrating key scenes of the film.

Steven Spielberg, whose *Raiders of the Lost Ark* is being produced by George Lucas, originally turned to Steranko to be the production designer since the film was going to have the "feel" of the classic Reed Crandall *Blackhawk* comic. Various commitments and geographic dislocation eventually caused Steranko to bow out of the picture. He was replaced by Dave Stevens, an artist who got his roots in Marvel comics and later began working with Doug Wildey on various animation projects.

Paul Power, an Australian comics artist, got his first taste of working in film when he provided some storyboard illustration for Peter Wier's exotic thriller *The Last Wave*. He has since left Australia for the glitter of Hollywood, and after working at Hanna-Barbera for several months, eventually bumped into Cheech & Chong. It seems that they had been

Carl Macek is a freelance writer based in Hollywood whose work has appeared in Starlog *and* The Comic Book Price Guide.

looking for Power for several years after seeing a promotional comic he had drawn which featured the comedy team. Power was hired as a staff production artist working on promotional concepts as well as designing scenes for upcoming Cheech & Chong movies.

Mike Ploog, who began his career in film working on Ralph Bakshi's *Wizards* and *Lord of the Rings*, is now finding spare time hard to come by. He went to London to do production drawings on *Superman II*, and was asked to produce artwork for the upcoming *Flash Gordon* feature due from Dino DeLaurentis. Further, Ploog is busy with production drawings for Universal Studios, and is reportedly working on a horror film project with Oliver Stone, the screenwriter of *Midnight Express*.

Jack Kirby, who initially drew storyboards for the *Fantastic Four* cartoon, is designing presentation art and character artwork for Ruby-Spears Fall 1980 shows.

Alfredo Alcala is inking Kirby's artwork at Ruby-Spears.

Mike Sekowsky, long time comic book artist, is very successful, working full time in the layout department at Hanna-Barbera, designing character models for the new shows for 1980.

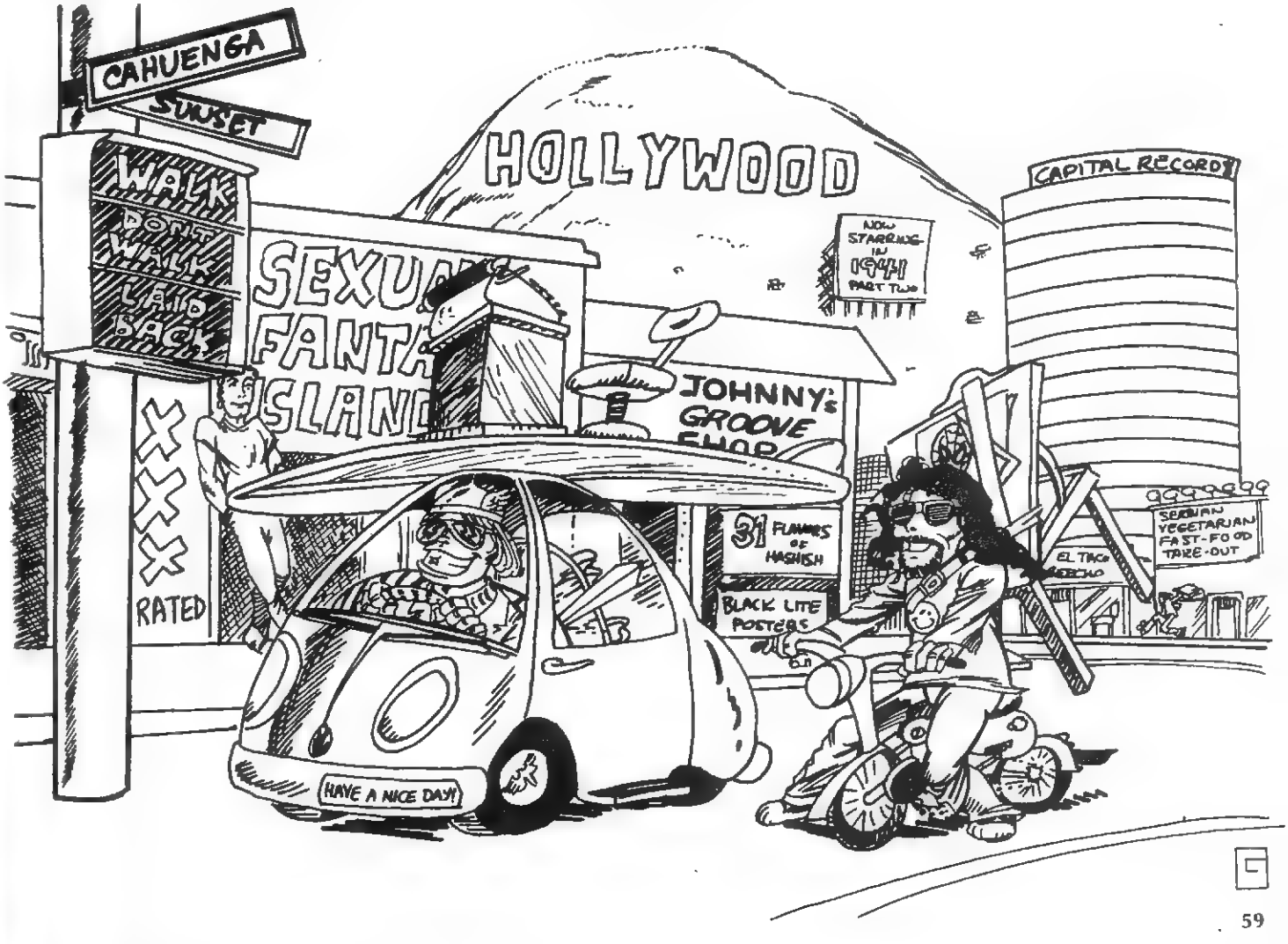
Scott Shaw remains the head of layout for new shows at Hanna-Barbera.

Will Meugniot has moved from Hanna-Barbera to Filmation and is primarily doing model sheets and design, while getting some storyboard work.

The picture for artists in Hollywood appears promising. After Ralph McQuarrie's pre-production paintings for *Star Wars* were merchandized to such a large degree, producers are looking for artists whose work in pre-production is finished enough to stand as merchandizable commodities. Storyboards and the like have taken on new meaning. From functional aids allowing directors the luxury of visualizing movies on paper prior to the actual filming to "objects d'art" which serve as an adjunct to movie tie-in merchandising, pre-production art seems to be the direction that a number of comic artists are taking in the movie business outside of the animation field.

A great deal of interest is also being generated in film projects which are adaptations of comic strip and comic book characters. There is Robert Altman's *Popeye*, as well as proposed versions of *Terry and the Pirates*, *Dick Tracy*, *Batman*, *Sheena*, *Queen of the Jungle*, *Annie*, etc. It is safe to say that Hollywood's head is turned in the direction of the comics.

The West Coast is alive with comic book writers and artists. It is the breeding ground for much of what is happening in the industry outside of New York. In the past, most of the fan-oriented press has relied on *Variety* and other trade papers for information regarding the influence and effect that comics and science fiction are having on the film and television industries. Whenever possible, this column will deal with the original source rather than function as a rehash of other media publications. Heresay and rumor will most certainly be overlooked. Controversy will not. As this column progresses, we will focus on the personalities involved in relevant fields who call Southern California their home. There will be interviews, informed commentary, spirited reviews and an honest appraisal of the state of the art. ■



Comic Strips/Richard Howell

Mary Perkins' Curtain Call or Exit, Stage Left

On September 9, 1979, the long and distinguished run of *On Stage*, as well as the career of its actress heroine, Mary Perkins, came to an end.

Leonard Starr, the strip's creator/writer/artist, decided it was time to move on to new projects, and is now writing and drawing *Annie*, the revamped and retitled *Little Orphan Annie*. Presumably the Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate could have chosen to continue *On Stage* under a replacement creative team, yet they did not do so. Aside from the fact that all continuity comic strips are slowly being dropped by increasing numbers of newspapers, certainly the syndicate must have ultimately decided that none could successfully continue Mary Perkins' adventures in the shadow of Starr's high standards, which have raised *On Stage* to, arguably, the finest human interest strip in the history of the medium.

Leonard Starr was raised in New York, the city which most exemplifies the theater milieu, and attended Pratt Institute in 1943. He was reportedly less than thrilled with the quality of art instruction at Pratt, and feels they taught him very little. If nothing else, Pratt was regarded as a virtual new talent preserve by the then-burgeoning comic book publishing houses, and like many of his peers, Starr soon found himself learning on-the-job as a young comics professional. *Airboy* comics featured his work frequently, as did the Simon and Kirby edited *Young Romance* and *Young Love*. Eventually, as Starr's skills increased, he began submitting comic strip proposals to various syndicates. *On Stage* scored and began publication in February 1957.

As Starr's "Mary Perkins" began to rise, so did Mary Perkins' star. An actress who was not overly successful, Mary was working as a cigarette girl in a nightclub where reporters from *View* magazine met. A bet between the reporters that saturation journalism could make a star out of anyone gained Mary - chosen as their test case - immediate national exposure. Luckily Mary's talents prevented her otherwise inevitable fall from prominence. Mary was saved from virtual white slavery at the hands of a dictatorial producer by gangster Johnny Q, and she soon met and married *View* photographer, Pete Fletcher. Under the management of Nat Blessing, Mary's career climbed until she became, and remained, an international star.

Doubtlessly, under less capable hands, a strip featuring a heroine who had already married and who had already reached a comfortable career position whould quickly degenerate into plots to undermine either of the above circumstances, or into endless complacent tedium. Fortunately, Starr was neither adolescent enough to regard mutually compatable domesticity as stagnating, nor was he uncreative enough as to see cutthroat, rat-race style plots as the only option in a strip about a career woman.

To Starr's credit, his options were broadened considerably by the fact that his career woman was Mary Perkins, not Winnie Winkle or Brenda Starr. Mary Perkins was a small town girl who made good, She was willing to meet her acquaintances and coworkers more than halfway, but refused to let herself be pushed around (a

Richard E. Howell is the creator of the alternative comic, Portia Prinz of the Glamazons, *and a comics reviewer for* The Science Fiction Times.

...EVEN SO! WHETHER OR NOT YOU PAID ANYTHING FOR IT, THAT SCRIPT IS WORTH UPWARDS OF FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS, SO WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, YOU DID A NICE THING!
WELL... YOU LIKED THE SCRIPT, MARY...
...AND YOUR FRIEND, THE SOFT-SPOKEN ONE LOOKED SO ANXIOUS, AND... I DON'T KNOW... SO DOWN-AT-THE-HEELS...
YES — POOR HARRY... DID YOU KNOW THAT AT ONE TIME HE WAS VERY NEARLY A BIG STAR?
YEAH? WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?
WHO CAN SAY? SHOW BUSINESS HAPPENED TO HIM. FOR SOME CAREERS THERE'S NO MIDDLE. JUST ALL THE WAY OR NOTHING. THAT'S WHY HE'S SO GRATEFUL FOR THE SCRIPT.
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Johnny Q and Mary: On view are Starr's stylish backgrounds, strong composition and expert sense of drapery, character and expressions.

fact which initially earned her Johnny Q's admiration — 10/12/58). Mary developed a wry, tolerant attitude toward humanity's eccentricities, but her sense of magnanimity was doubtlessly secured by her knowledge that she could be a very dangerous enemy, as in her total on-stage humiliation of the scheming Vanna (6/8/67). Mary never lost either her Midwestern morals and compassion, or her basic romantic naivete, yet she was nevertheless sophisticated, intelligent, and a real lady in every sense. Pete Fletcher was slightly more wry and snide than his wife, as well as more worldly and outspoken, but he generally shared her beliefs and values (including the right of a wife to pursue her own career) and was an ideal complement to Mary.

Through the 1960s, *On Stage* offered serious human interest storylines. In fashioning stories about and around the likeable and lively personalities of Mary and Pete, Starr involved them (and the readers) in the foibles of a massive cast of characters who slid in and out of the continuity, all in the more or less direct narrative of the Fletchers' lives and careers.

The gentlemanly gangster, Johnny Q, was a frequent face in the early years, especially before Mary's marriage, and his underworld connections shadowed any interrelationships between him and the Fletchers. The tragic Maximus, a horror movie actor, concealed from his audience the horror of his own hopelessly disfigured visage. His several meetings with Mary emphasized both the selflessness and nobility of his soul, which contrasted so sharply with his outward appearance, and the progressive erosion of the likelihood that he could ever live as a normal man. A Cold War anti-hero, the charming and conscientious Communist agent, Grisha Volkov, followed his own peculiar sense of honor through several backstage bouts of US-USSR espionage (the last being the kidnapping of defector/ impresario Valerian Stepanovsky from his acting school in America.

A later recurring player (1973-74) whose introduction mirrored the strip's change in tone between the 1960s and 1970s was X. Boomer Baily, an endearing combination of an obnoxiously ostentatious con man and Mary's fairy godfather. Starr's semi-humorous scripts in the early 1970s exemplified his virtuoso use of the medium to command his audience's emotions. He realized, as have all the significant writers and critics of comedy, that true humor arises from realistic, identifiable, funny situations involving characters with whom the reader can emphathise. The humor in the 1970s *On Stage* often made the reader realize that comedy and tragedy are frequently indistinguishable parts of life; the impeccably wry dialogue delivered by the characters did by no means illegitimize the genuine sadness and pain they could and did feel at other times.

Inspired by this exuberant freedom from the traditional restraints of a human interest strip, Starr's 1970s continuities cut deep into characters' moral bases with a serio-comic double-edged knife. In a medium whose characters generally fall into moral categories of black and white, Starr created a fascinating retinue of supporting players with mixed motivations: Bernie Kibble, a handsome but simple comic book fan chosen to play his hero, Captain Virtue, found that his acting ability exceeded both his role and his amoral best friend/manager's plans for them both; Mirabelle Ingram, an international artistic success who was privately still the shy girl who worked in *View's* art department and nurtured a passion for Pete Fletcher; and the sullen, hate-filled Alix Ryder, who victimized Mary's co-manager Webster Ivie, encouraging him by her very standoffishness to support her and pay for her falsified debts.

A typical *On Stage* episode was the "Seadog Scully" adventure (6/8/74). In it, Mary guests on a fairly stupid television show featuring Billy Sam Purdee as Seadog. Billy Sam's wife, Charmaine, is skinny and homely, yet manages his show and his life with such ability and loving attention that the entire enterprise threatens to collapse when Billy Sam leaves her for the winsome, buxom starlet, Bitsy Walker. Charmaine accepts her husband's request for a divorce, yet her indispensibility shadows Billy Sam's and Bitsy's plans for happiness. Billy Sam realizes that he and his career are nothing without Charmaine, and Bitsy gives him up. Starr characteristically flavored this fairly predictable melange with original elements. The homely Charmaine provided wry laughter, and inspired reader sympathy and respect when she responded to Mary's suggestion that she fight Bitsy on her own terms—physical attractiveness—with: "Mary, if you sent a floor mop to a hairdresser, covered its handle with sequins, draped it with furs and jewels... you would add nothing to its *real* through *humble* usefulness . . .you would simply rob it of its *integrity* as a floor mop."

A collection of Starr's moral themes would prove a fascinating subject for analysis. With the varied characters he portrayed, and the frequently downbeat endings, it is perhaps surprising to observe the dedicatedly humanist focus of the stories. When two film producers, contemplating a movie about the old star, Dolly Devoe, watched one of the former star's old films, they differed on the worth of those films. "Don't you dig their charm, their innocence?" asked one. The answer: "Well, if by innocence you mean cardboard characters, counterfeit emotions and dopey plots, then they're *that*, all right." "Oh, come on, Anson," continued his friend, "These

The rape sequence; Starr's sense of social responsibility is often stated through the compassionate Mary Perkins.

...OH, WOW! I DIDN'T MEAN TO GET YOU INVOLVED IN THIS MESS!
I DON'T MIND COOKIE! IT'S TIME THE WOMEN IN THESE CASES STOPPED FEELING AS THOUGH THEY'RE THE CRIMINALS!...

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...THAT DOES HELP TO LIVEN UP MY READING MATTER, YES, I'M TOLD THAT IN ITS PRESENT FORM THE MOVIE WILL GET AN "R" RATING...
...BUT YOU'VE DESTROYED ITS INTEGRITY, MR. PINCHOT!...
MISS PERKINS - WHY SHOULD PEOPLE PAY TO SEE A MOVIE RATED "G" OR EVEN "PG" WHEN THEY CAN WAIT AND SEE IT ON TV UNEDITED...AND FREE?!
BECAUSE... BECAUSE... UH...
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Behind Starr's flip charac terization and wit lurks a decided satiric barb.

movies captivated an entire generation." The reply: "Yes, and while it held that generation captive, it stuffed their heads with cotton candy and tinfoil glamor...in fact, it may have stamped that generation with an infantile view of life that *this* generation is paying the *price* for right now."

Often the physic of Starr's social criticism was sweetened by laughter: for example, the story of Beau Valentine, a classically handsome goody-goody actor whose failing career was bolstered by an accident which required plastic surgery. The surgery restructured his face into a cruder, more brutal visage, and his personality mysteriously followed suit. At the end, Mary commented to Beau's manager, "Amazing! They say man's character forms his face—and here the *face* is forming the *man*!" The manager, facing away from the reader, answered, "He's lost all sense of decency, Mary. He's unscrupulous, violent, obscene—he's become absolutely contemptible in every way! In short...(he turns and smiles)...he's *today*!" (8/26/73).

On Stage, as a realistic strip, also examined many controversial topics. During a period when Indian rights were in the news, Squatting Moose came to New York with Pete to appear in ecologically-oriented commercials (10/1/73). His off camera antics such as vandalism and rowdyism resulted in his several squabbles with Doe, his fiancee, until she learned to her confusion that Moose's clowning attracted more positive attention for their cause from the jaded American public than did his prime-time speech on Indian affairs. The rape of the Gidget-like Cookie Ayres (1/2/74) was a virtual textbook example of how subjects that are virtually unspeakable for comics can be treated with intelligence, sensitivity, and a high regard for practical and moral instructiveness. Near the end of *On Stage*'s run, Starr once again scored with a story of scandal and questionable paternity in the "perfect family" (modeled after the Barrymores). In such potentially hackneyed situations, the commitment of Starr, the humanist, surfaced as his understanding portrayal of the family's mutual support and compassion bordered on the inspirational (the 10/5/79 strip reprinted here).

It is impossible in this space to do justice to an appreciation of Starr's superb artwork, but it could best be described as a combination of impressionism and realism. His use of photographs for background reference, and models for characters, brought substantial identifiable verisimilitude to story situations, yet his strong compositional sense prevented any of the textbook-y pitfalls of either aid. Starr excelled at making his characters identifiable by utilizing individualized facial shapes and features, and distinctive hair styles. He also possessed a "magic brush" which rendered textures so expertly as to make Starr, the inker, the envy of his peers. In addition, Starr, the colorist, was superb at utilizing unconventional color schemes (generally with a limited palette) in a consistently complementary and attractive manner. Starr's major gift, however, was his uncanny sense of, and skill in rendering, personalized character mannerisms and subtlety of facial expressions. His versatility and perspicacity in this alone was sufficient to legitimize all the awards and accolades garnered by *On Stage*... and then some. Starr has stated his opinion that in comics, "drawing should be half the writing," and he obviously practices what he preached.

Yet Mary Perkins is now unemployed, and her collection of colleagues has similarly vanished. Despite the apparent malaise of the continuity strip. certainly an achievement of *On Stage*'s quality could not be disposed of arbitrarily? No, Starr's decision to discontinue the strip seemed inevitable due to his increasing discomfort with syndicate restrictions (fashioning Sunday pages in which up to three panels might be dropped, laying out panels out of which up to 1¼" might be cropped, and so forth—especially difficult with a realistic drawing composition), and his opinion that perhaps his serialized dramatization of Mary Perkins' life and times had run its course.

In an interview printed in September 1972 (*Graphic Story World*, vol. II, No. 3), Starr was quoted: "I know many guys who are perfectly satisfied to keep doing the same thing...Some guys are not. I'm one of them. I have no intention of finishing my life out doing *On Stage*...I think the trick is to keep your interests as broad as possible, so that you can go off in as many directions as possible."

Mary Perkins, by all accounts an excellent actress, knew well enough not to prolong a closing, and Leonard Starr, her brilliant playwright, knew when the play should end. ■

End Notes

by Peter Sanderson

In this, the closing column in each issue, we will be featuring reviews of interesting and important work in comics or comics-related areas. I could not hope for a more fitting subject for the initial installment than Jules Feiffer's recently published graphic novel *Tantrum* (Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., $8.95). Its genesis lies in a brief continuing story Feiffer did for his regular weekly strip in *The Village Voice* and other newspapers. Followers of the strip may not be surprised at Feiffer's thematic expansion of this small parable, but they may well be astonished at the masterful effects he achieves with his deceptively simple "cartoony" style.

The book opens with a montage of one-panel scenes depicting its middle-aged hero Leo going through variations on his state of quiet desperation: grimness, bewilderment, wistful lustfulness, panic, utter blankness, and a quiet, contemplative sadness. On one page he sits balanced on a window ledge, his body covered in murky shadow against an oppressively black wall, his face distorted with near-suicidal depression as he calmly insists to his wife that he is still in control of himself.

But something else is building under the surface until finally it explodes visually on the page: the unmoving, unprepossessing adult suddenly catapults himself onto the floor, primally screaming for his mother. Then it happens: Leo, in the space between pages, abruptly turns into a two-year-old. His wife and children react with absurdly extreme hysteria; Leo, on the other hand, moves from an initial look of astonishment to an angrily defiant smile at his wife to an exasperated frown at his helpless family to, finally, a real child's look of triumphant joy. For Leo has finally gotten his fondest wish: he is no longer an adult weighed down with responsibility for his own problems and those of his family but once again a baby whose every wish must be catered to. And he still has an adult's mind; he can enjoy his childish pleasures more than a real two-year-old could because he knows what the miseries of adulthood are. Leo has regained paradise. Or so he thinks.

It is a fantasy story that could only have been done as a graphic novel, for the cartoons continually confront us with its central paradox. The facial expressions of an adult alternate with those of a baby on Leo's face as his emotions shift from moment to moment. We see an adult's language coming from the mouth of the baby before our eyes.

Moreover, it is a story that had to be done not in a series of "realistic" drawings but through a series of "cartoons," and I am using that word with its usual humorous connotations. *Tantrum* makes its serious points for the most part through comically surreal turns of events, caricatures of particular kinds of personalities done in both the dialogue and art, and the standard comedy technique of continually undercutting the desires of a foolishly obsessed character. In reverting to babyhood, Leo has the means to achieve his vision of nirvana, but he needs help to get there. And he can't find it. Not only that, but his goal seems more questionable the longer his vain quest continues.

At first Leo searches for someone in his family to take care of him and attend to his every wish, but every one of them, and even each person he encounters on the street, is lost in his own neuroses. Leo's mother, aged, stooped and vulture-like in appearance, is a paranoid who treats him as an unfamiliar foe; his father is shown sitting eternally by himself, complaining, uncaring and isolated. Leo's brother is so wrapped up in his worries about his own moral corruption that he doesn't even notice what has happened to Leo. His sisters are drawn with faces distorted by hysteria; they are too caught up in their own self-pitying shock and competitiveness to help him. In the final shot in this sequence we see the sisters jabbering away, while in the shadowed foreground, Leo's child's face boils with contempt.

He vainly tries his parents again, and he walks away from their home down a black path in the shadows in long shot, looking totally lost. He returns to his wife, who is now drawn as if she had aged and been immobilized in her chair by bitterness. Feiffer's shots emphasize the long physical —and psychological—distance across the room over which they stare uncompromisingly at one another. She drags him to a lawyer to force him back to the moral responsibilities he has fled, and here our attitude towards Leo is altered considerably. Whatever sympathy we had for him becomes mixed with a stronger sense than before of his selfishness and immaturity. He reacts to the lawyer by raspberry-blowing (whose silliness is emphasized by the distortions given his face) and flees from the office wailing, only to confront his fun-house mirror image multiplied a hundredfold: an entire roomful of adults who have turned back into babies, all giving the rest of the world Bronx cheers in unison, all demanding to have things their own way and no one else's. Again we see Leo's shadowy face in the foreground, full of contempt.

He settles on a final shot at finding utopia, whose essence he now conceives of as being mothered by a beautiful woman. He makes his way to the Palm Springs home of his sister-in-law, the object of his fantasies, and we are given a tremendous visual build-up. Already the confined rooms we'd expect Feiffer to draw have given way to convincing shots of outdoor city locations, and now we find evocative landscapes of palm trees, and, all the way, Leo's thought-balloon visions of Joyce's beauty, setting us up for the appearance of the real Joyce, another mirror-image, but distorted. If Leo seeks his "essence" through babyishness, Joyce seeks hers by embracing death: she has become a decrepit, starved horror, who, in the book's most surreal sequence, tries to break off her limbs by contorting herself pretzel-like in the middle of the desert. Leo's despair at his utter failure finds a powerful, nightmarish visual equivalent; this cartoonlike child grows nearly catatonic while his face, page by page, drowns in wrinkles until he resembles a wizened dwarf.

But the story does not stop here. Leo eventually reverts back to his true age, but yet he finally reaches a happy ending through some rather incredible means, complete with a walk into a convincingly romantic-looking sunset one wouldn't have thought to find—thematically or in terms of drawing technique—in Feiffer's work. Considering all the pitfalls we have been shown, the ending must be intended ironically, and yet perhaps we are meant to consider seriously the fact that Leo has finally accepted a partner in his quest for happiness rather than remaining self-centered. Read it and decide for yourself, and in the process, see what can be done within the comics medium even within the supposedly limiting genre of comedy. ■

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